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Not a question of austerity but a matter of quality time

After surgery, Clinton tells Kerry how to beat Bush

NEW YORK—Former US President Bill Clinton again showed his unerring instinct for stealing the political spotlight…even when sitting in a hospital.

Clinton's successful open-heart surgery Monday dominated US media coverage on the Labor Day holiday, stealing the thunder from Democratic White House hopeful Sen.

UPDATES A-24

GMA vows to take on 'vested interests'

Smugglers, tax evaders, coup plotters warned

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

SAYING she did not mind becoming unpopular, President Macapagal-Arroyo vowed yesterday to take on all vested interests that would get in the way of her fiscal reforms and anticorruption campaign.

"Let there be no mistake: I will move this nation forward and I will take on whatever vested interests stand in my way," the President said at a breakfast forum of the Manila Overseas Press Club.

Asked who the vested interests were, Ms. Arroyo said: "All sides right or left, … I don't have to name them, including freeloaders."

When the forum host inquired if these included coup plotters, smugglers and tax evaders, she said: "You mentioned them, all of them, yes."

Partly due to tax evasion and smuggling, tax collection fell to 13.7 percent of gross domestic product in 2000 from 17 percent in 1997. It is estimated that the country is losing P270 billion yearly to technical (undervaluation of imports) and outright smuggling.

The falling tax effort has forced the government to engage in a borrowing binge to finance its expenditures, resulting in an ever growing public sector deficit and debt.

The public sector deficit were the past seven years has reached 3968.10 billion, while the debt has ballooned to 3[illegible] billion as of September 2003.

Eleven economists from the University of the Philippines had warned that the Philippines could face economic collapse in two to three years if the government did not rein in the public sector deficit and debt.

A TOUGH TALKING President Macapagal-Arroyo tells members of the Manila Overseas Press Club that she means business in her campaign to "name this nation forward."

Solon hits Pagcor-Stanley Ho tieup

By Carlos Pedida

INSPECTED executives of Macau casino magnate Stanley Ho have gained a foothold in the local gambling scene with the knowledge and approval of the state-run Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp., according to a lawmaker.

In a privilege speech he delivered on Monday, Rep. Cristino Figueroa (Lakas, Davao) said "even indications pointing to one views are being taken over by foreigners." He added: "A group of notorious characters, strongly identified [with] and objectively using the name of Mr. Stanley Ho … is now moving stealthily and forcefully into controlling the casino and other gambling operations in our country."

Figueroa said a certain Jack Lu, or as known as Lin Shu Chang, "entirely

FULL STORY A-12

AT HIS gilded palace, Brunei's Sultan Haassanal Bolkiah performs a traditional pre-wedding ritual with Dayangku Sarah Pengiran Salleh Abdul Rahaman (left) last Sat. 100, Crown Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah. The young couple are scheduled to marry next year.

Malacañang seeks supplemental budget for Napocor

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance will seek a supplemental budget because the proposed 2005 Government appropriations are somewhat by Malacañang to Congress does not contain the 37-percent revenue expense of National Power Corp. (Napocor).

Finance Undersecretary Rowen Chiotic submitted this yesterday at the hearing of the Senate ways and means committee, urging the proposed budget of P987.7 billion next year was pegged to the capacity of the government to increase revenues to P700 billion "plus a little borrowing."

Budget Undersecretary Laura Neuza said, "We are submitting expenditures that can be funded by existing taxes."

Neuza told the committee that the supplemental budget would be submitted after Congress approved the "core" budget.

"We know that we have very low capital expenditures, so apart from paying the interest expense for the debt of Napocor that will be assumed by the national government, the supplemental budget will be largely for expenditure such as infrastructure," Neuza said.

"The P5[illegible] billion would not include the P80 billion in new taxes," said Neuza, who stressed that the supplemental budget would be funded by the eight additional taxes proposed by Malacañang to Congress.

"Oh, yes, that can be explained," she said when asked by Sen. Mar Roxas where the P80 billion would go.

Guingona told the senators that besides the interest expense of Napocor, the rest of the supplemental budget would go to unprogrammed expenses.

The congressman, Ralph Recto, however, dissented, to academic [illegible] because 20 percent of the unprogrammed expenses would go to government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs) in the form of subsidies, equity

MALACAÑANG A-12

One of Asia's grandest weddings . . .

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN—It is dragging on for Asia's grandest royals.

Brunei was rolling out the red carpet yesterday for royals and government leaders attending the wedding of the heir to the throne of the oil-rich Southeast Asian sultanate.

Crown Prince Al Muhtadee Billah Bolkiah, 30, will marry commoner Sarah Salleh, 27, [illegible] at the royal palace in an extravagant three-day ceremony of Brunian tradition.

A spectacular procession around the [illegible] deeply rooted will follow the wedding, palace aides told Agence France-Presse.

The father of the groom, Sultan Haassanal Bolkiah, was once reputed to be the world's richest man.

Bolkiah's King Fahad, Japan's Crown Prince Hirohito and other royals will join an impressive array of heads of government from Brunei's immediate Southeast Asian neighbors who will begin arriving today.

The guest list includes Philippine President Macapagal-Arroyo, Indonesian President

FULL STORY A-11

THE ASSASSINS OF ABRA

'Just like killing chicken'

By Aretha Kira Paredes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

(First of three parts)

Editor's Note: Citing security concerns, the people who talked to Cha because for this special report requested that their true identities not be revealed and they be identified only by pseudonyms. They also

SPECIAL REPORT

HOSTAGE of torture at rural groups in Abra think killing is no big deal. One says that after a number of killings, get used to it.

Church group formed to fight gov't corruption

By Bernadette A. Pisco
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—While other groups are crowding money and jewelry to help the government weather the fiscal crisis, a Church-backed organization here will focus its energies on how to fight graft and corruption.

"Ours is a movement that will try to awaken the sleeping giant, the Church," Fr. Carmelo Ubaña, vice chair of Ateneo Pilipino (Stand Up Filipino), told the business yesterday.

He said the group would "partner with the Office of the Ombudsman" and monitor the procurement processes of government agen-

CHURCH A-12

A3
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2004
Second FRONTPAGE

Junk Cabinet appointments, opposition senators ask SC

By Philip C. Tubeza

OPPOSITION senators asked the Supreme Court yesterday to nullify President Macapagal-Arroyo's appointments of nine secretaries to her Cabinet, claiming that this was unconstitutional.

Led by Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel, they asked the high tribunal to stop the "acting secretaries" from performing their duties.

In their petition, the opposition senators said that the secretaries had taken their oaths of office before being confirmed by the congressional Commission on Appointments.

Even if they got the nod of the CA, the appointees are merely deemed nominated and cannot take the oath, much less perform the duties of their office, they said.

They said that appointments of heads of departments while Congress was in session can be made only after the CA's consent.

Asked for comment, deputy presidential spokesperson Ricardo Saludo said the opposition legal advisory were "free to undertake such actions."

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye earlier said the President's action had precedence in past administrations.

He said there had been no problems before when Cabinet appointees were allowed to take over in an acting capacity while they awaited CA confirmation.

The nine Cabinet members were Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Florencio Abad (education), Arthur Cruz (defense), Michael Defensor (environment and natural resources), Joseph Durano (tourism), Raul Gonzalez (justice), Alberto Romulo (foreign affairs), Rene Villa (agrarian reform) and Arthur Yap (agriculture).

According to Pimentel, Cabinet members appointed while Congress was in session and assuming office without being confirmed by the CA, "may be held liable for usurpation of authority."

He said the President, by authorizing the newly appointed Cabinet members to perform the functions of their respective offices, was "guilty of a serious breach of the Constitution."

By extending acting appointments to her new Cabinet members, the President "not only ignored the clear wording of (the Constitution) but also shows an utter lack of respect" for the CA, they said.

They said a nominee needing CA confirmation could not be appointed in an acting capacity merely to fill a vacancy. They said a vacancy in the office of a department secretary may be filled with the designation of an undersecretary.

If acting appointments were to be allowed, a President could appoint an secretary for a number of years, rendering a every law, without ever having to submit the acting appointment to the CA for confirmation, the petitioners said.

"If we do not challenge this attitude of circumventing the provisions of the Constitution, we run the risk of diminishing that respect for the fundamental law that is so vital if it is to continue inscribing its virtue as the supremacy of the basic rights and liberties of our people," they said.

"The President and her subordinates in the executive department apparently suffer from a propensity to the legal shortcuts in their efforts to solve the problems afflicting the nation," they said.

Aside from Pimentel, those who signed the petition were senators Edgardo Angara, Juan Ponce Enrile, Loren Legarda-Fernandez, Jinggoy Estrada, Panfilo Lacson, Alfredo Lim, Aquilino Pimentel and Sergio Osmeña III.

PIMENTEL

GMA, lawmakers named in report defend pork barrel

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said she agreed with the public's perception that the congressional pork barrel was tainted with graft.

The President recalled that when she was a senator from the third district of Pampanga, her pork barrel, then known as the Countrywide Development Fund,

"It is not a corrupt system per se but any institution can be abused by unscrupulous individual in it," Ms Arroyo said.

She said that one of the reasons she was popular with townmayors was that she turned over her entire CDF to them.

"I never came with the line-manner (counselors)," said the President, who was a senator in 1992 before she ran for vice president in 1998.

The pork barrel, known as the Priority Assistance Development Fund, is allocated for the pet projects of legislators, many of whom allegedly use them to make money from the bribes and commissions from the private contractors of the projects.

Various congressmen who were identified in a recent Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism report as having diverted their pork barrel funds to their own relatives who happened to be local officials power, also defended the practice.

In Iloilo City, former Iloilo Rep. Oscar Garin Jr. insisted that there was nothing irregular with his diverting his pork barrel funds to his hometown, Dumalud, rather his own Oton "Hatawan" Jr. was the mayor.

He said it had involved the release of funds to projects in the seven municipalities, not to Garin but others.

The PCIJ report identified Garin as among the 30 congressmen in the 12th Congress who had released their pork barrel funds to relatives who were mayors in their districts.

Garin released P4 million to Dumalud in 1993 and P93 million in 2002, according to the PCIJ report.

The former congressmen, who was defeated in the gubernatorial race in Iloilo in the last election, said he chose to channel the funds through Dumalud because mayors in his district who were his political enemies made it hard for barangay captains, who were identified as his supporters, to access the funds.

In Dagupan City, Pangasinan Rep. Amelita Calimag said there was "nothing wrong" with his "dispensing" his PDAF allocation to the municipality of Bolinao, where his father was the mayor.

Calimag said the Bolinao government, under his older brother, former Mayor Jesus Celerio, only served as a conduit for the funds which were used to finance different projects in Pangasinan's first district in 2002. Aalin Lubop-Arwillano, Yolanda Ironside-Pascua, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, and Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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Sabaya's sister kept ransom, cops claim

By Philip C. Tubeza and Julie S. Mijeta, PDI Mindanao Bureau

ISABELA CITY, Basilan—Asnia Abdulmajar Tilao, the younger sister of slain Abu Sayyaf spokesperson Abu Sabaya, "is the key to Sabaya's hiding place," said police authorities in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

According to ARMM Chief Supt. Salamin Bilada, Tilao served as courier, negotiator-collector on behalf of the Abu Sayyaf. She was also the benevolent sister of Sabaya's then of the boy.

Tilao, 40, who was arrested in Basilan on Friday could have got ten millions of pesos from the ransom payments, Bilada said.

Rolando Calimutan, deputy prosecutor for Western Mindanao, said that despite her denials, the government had overwhelming evidence against Tilao.

"She (Tilao) conspired with her Abu Sayyaf and negotiated for ransom, especially in the release of the hostages, so we are going to prosecute her like we did the others," Calimutan said.

On Monday, former Abu Sayyaf hostage Angelita Montelibano positively identified Tilao during a press conference in the Department of Justice.

Montelibano and Tilao were detained on additional P1,500,000 for her release in September 2001.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez presented Tilao and another Abu Sayyaf bandit, Benamilla Ismael, to the media.

They both face 20 counts of kidnapping with serious illegal detention and separate charges for the kidnapping of tourists from the Dos Palmas Resort in Palawan in May 2001. With reports from Charlie C. Señase and Rose Mia S. de Guzman, PDI Mindanao Bureau

US envoy comes a-calling

By Philip C. Tubeza

IN AN apparent bid to mend fences, Ambassador Francis Ricciardone visited the Department of Justice yesterday for a "courtesy conversation" with Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez on how to improve the United States legal relationship with the Philippines.

Ricciardone's call came on the heels of Gonzalez's decision on extradition to his subordinates last week to make it difficult for the US to extradite accused persons from the Philippines, following a Calibrian court's denial of a Philippine extradition to have American Brad Lawton extradited back to the country.

Lawton is the principal suspect in the 2000 killing of his wife, actress Nida Blanca.

"We talked about how to cooperate and how we could make the rule of law stronger to both countries. Because we could make extradition proceedings in big picture things," Ricciardone said in an interview as he emerged from the DOJ.

"I came to pay my respects and pledge my support," he added.

Gonzalez said he had told Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño "to make it difficult" for the US to get back wanted persons from the Philippines if Americans they are making it difficult for us to extradite (persons) we want".

Asked about the Brunei case, Ricciardone said he was not aware of specific cases and that it was up to the prosecutors and courts in both countries to work on them.

Small savings bank declares holiday

By Doris C. Dumlao

FIRST Savings Bank, a small bank owned by the Pajaron family yesterday suspended operations following a spate of heavy withdrawals.

According to Alberto Reyes, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas officer in charge, First Savings officials declared a bank holiday as of 5:30 p.m. yesterday.

The BSP yesterday deployed examiners to determine whether or not to permanently shut down the bank, or if it was still viable for rehabilitation.

The bank holiday was declared only a few hours after Reyes said there was "no cause for concern because this is a very isolated case."

Reyes said the bank was "very small," with total deposit liabilities of only P150 million.

"It's not even 0.01 percent of the total banking system," Reyes said.

But that assurance did not prevent scores of depositors who crowded its Binondo branch demanding to withdraw their deposits.

The bank, which caters to small clients, has a depositor base of 18,000, according to banking sources.

First Savings officials reportedly went to the BSP a few months ago to secure banking authorities that a new investor group was buying into the bank. But the deal reportedly did not push through.

Reyes said the appointment of Sinatoral establishes as of June this year, First Savings Bank had P123.47 million worth of assets against P120.58 million worth of liabilities.

The Pajaron family, which used to own the defunct Interbank Pajaron Branch, holds 88 percent of the bank. The remaining 12 percent is owned by the Realesta family group and board member Ricardo Cadorna.

According to the BSP profile on First Savings, the bank chair is Herminio Pajaron.

The bank's assumed principal stockholder, said to be the family patriarch, reportedly died recently resulting in a vacuum in the shareholder base.

There is also a vacuum in the bank's management. Bank staff members said its president, Maria Pat Orobia, resigned last month and no replacement has been named since then.

The business ownership trend to reach the bank's head office last noon of the bank officials was available for comment. Bank staff members who answered phone calls said their superiors were either absent or in a meeting.

To fend off a bank disaster, the BSP can either shut down the bank or help it if it is found to be insolvent and if the liabilities exceed the assets, or extend emergency financial assistance if the bank is still viable.

"We are now waiting for the report of the [BSP] examiners who went to the Bank's branches," Reyes said. The report was expected to be submitted last night.

The bank has branches in Dasmariñas, Cavite and Pasay. Its head office is located at 204 E. Rodriguez Blvd., Cubao, Quezon City.

Reyes said that the BSP would base their decision on the examiners' report.

BSP data shows that the 66-B bank has an authorized capital stock of P50 million and outstanding common shares of 500,000 with a par value of P100 per share. Its outstanding common stock is worth P49.19 million.

ELEVEN Filipino fishermen who were charged with sea piracy in Papua New Guinea arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport yesterday after the Philippine government worked for their release. The 11 were part of the 100 Filipino seamen who commandeered 12 fishing boats in the southeastern Pacific country and held them while demanding higher wages from their employers. With them is lawyer Reynaldo Bataclan (2nd from left), legal attache at the Philippine Embassy in Papua New Guinea.

Senate votes to postpone ARMM polls

By Christine D. Avendaño

VOTING 18-1, the Senate yesterday approved on third reading a bill that would defer for the sixth time the holding of elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

In the approved bill, the ARMM election scheduled for Sept. 13 this year was moved to the second Monday of September next year.

The bill also set succeeding ARMM regular elections to be held every second Monday of September every three years thereafter.

Because of the change in the election date, the bill designated all incumbent officials elected in the first regular election to remain in office in holdover capacity until their successors shall have been installed as soon of Sept. 30, 2005.

Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the Senate committee on constitutional amendments, said the senators sought the postponement of the ARMM elections because there was no budget for it given that the government was operating under the reenacted 2003 national budget.

Likewise, he said, by postponing the election, this would give the Consultation on Elections (Con-Con) to ensure that next year's polls would be automated.

The only senator to oppose the bill presented by the committee on constitutional amendments was Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile.

Gordon said Enrile opposed the measure because the ARMM election has already been postponed five times.

The election was postponed in 1996, 1999 and three times in 2001, he said.

DepEd scrambles to find room for one more usec

By Dona Pazzibugan

EDUCACION officials are at their wit's end trying to find room for the President's adviser for education, Rhoda Valiente, who has been appointed as the Department of Education's undersecretary for Mindanao.

Department insiders said the DepEd Central Office no more room for an extra official, considering the Palace order for all executive offices to practice austerity in the face of the fiscal crisis.

The department already has six undersecretaries and five assistant secretaries, when the DepEd plantilla allows for only four undersecretaries and four assistant secretaries.

DepEd employees have complained that Malacañang apparently has a "double standard" in its belt-tightening regime, with its austerity order applying only to the rank and file.

New Education Secretary Florencio Abad earlier said he was still thinking of what line function to assign to Valiente, who previously served as commissioner of the Commission on Higher Education and head of the DepEd's National Education and Testing Research Center.

He said Valiente's appointment to the DepEd as "special assistant to the Secretary" with the rank of undersecretary was in line with Malacañang's "streamlining" of its operations, doubling the presidential adviser for education.

"The President requested me to consider bringing her in because her expertise is in social services. She will be working here," said Abad.

Aside from finding work for Valiente, the DepEd also has to look for suitable office space for her at the Rizal Building, the main administrative building, has no available office space, the secretary said.

The DepEd also has to provide Valiente with a staff, a driver, a service vehicle, computers, office furniture and supplies—expenses not included in its current budget nor in its proposed budget or next year.

Valiente went to the DepEd for the turnover ceremonies on Sept. 1 but has not reported for work.

Mikey Arroyo seeks probe of Duty Free chocolates deal

By Carlos Pablo

SAYING every centavo counts nowadays, Rep. Jose Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo (Lakas, Pampanga) yesterday endorsed a detailed investigation into the alleged "overnight chocolate deal" involving former Tourism Secretary Roberto Ongpauco.

Arroyo said he was familiar with details of the deal in which Duty Free Philippines (DFP) gave away its concession rights over the sale of chocolates and other products to a foreign corporation based in the British Virgin Islands without a public bidding.

Last week, the Duty Free Philippines Employees Association filed graft charges before the Office of the Ombudsman against Ongpauco and DFP general manager Michael Rho.

The employees claimed that DFP stood to lose P300 million a year, or P1.6 billion in five years, over the deal.

Ongpauco just responded by claiming that the deal was being misquoted.

Meanwhile, DFP managing director David Weil yesterday denied that his company had entered into a midnight deal with DFP and the tourism department and welcomed a probe by the Ombudsman.

In a statement, Weil said his company would cooperate with the authorities to ensure that the award was in accordance with Philippine laws and regulations.

He stressed that chocolates and confectionery supply emitted with DFP was negotiated and finalized after a rigorous process with DFP management and with the full scrutiny and approval of its supervisory body, the PTA Board.

He added that the supply source was done with faithful adherence to DFP's long established procedures with regard to other similar arrangements during back to 1996, when DFP first negotiated a supply contract for its supermarket operations.

Lost medal

THE FIRST prize medal won by Wilfredo G. Pascual in the essay category of the 2004 Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards, which he received last week, was lost in a tricycle plying the Quezon City Hall area on Monday night. Pascual says he had to his bag a plaque he received from the Nuevo Ecija provincial government on Monday morning. Information regarding the bag can be noticed to 09.28.3241.8787.

INQUIRER.VP Inez Alcantara (right) awards a Sony TV to Chiqui Duenas, daughter of Ed Duenas, last month's INQTV Tanong ng Bayan winner. Duenas was the last person's 11th winner. INQTV, which airs every Thursday at 8 p.m. on ABC Channel 5 will be giving away two more TV sets this month.

'Just like killing chicken,' says Abra hired gun

From page A1

After his father's death, Julius joined elder brother Armand, who belonged to another PAG, in Abra. After two months of basic lessons in karate and firing and handling a gun, he and his brothers avenged their father's death.

Julius was an "apprentice" then. His brother made the kill.

As a full-fledged PAG member, Julius reported his first "assignment" and made his first kill when he was 14.

Armand, at 20, has the blood of four people on his hands. He made his first kill at 17.

"The first time I killed a person, I could not eat and sleep for a couple of days," Julius told the Inquirer. "But you get used to it and then you stop feeling anything. When I kill now, it seems like I'm only butchering a chicken."

Julius and Armand can put two of the 100 or so "goons" or members of private armed groups maintained by politicians in Abra (pop: 213,817 as of 2000), a landlocked valley in the Cordillera.

These groups have been blamed for politically motivated killings in the province starting in the 1980s, at least 14 killings of local politicians, two of them town mayors, have been attributed to members of rival PAGs from 1998 to 2004. (See accompanying table.)

State funds used to buy guns

Weeks before the May 10 elections, the Philippine National Police said it had rounded up 139 private armies in all the regions of the country, except Mindanao. One private army in Mindanao had as many as 200 members, armed with at least 220 high-powered weapons, it said.

The existence of these armed groups has aggravated the problem of loose firearms in the country, which had been estimated at between 300,000 and 800,000 guns.

A police official in the province acknowledged the strength of PAGs in Abra.

"PAC members are hired armed thugs because the politicians they serve use government funds to buy guns," the official said.

"In this province, the internal revenue allotment (IRA) is always the source of contention. If you go to several towns, you will notice that there have been no improvements in their roads and other infrastructure for the past years. This is because the money was used to buy high-powered guns."

In the 1970s and 1980s, Abra was known as an active opposition base of the communist New People's Army. But from 1986s onward, the province was put in the limelight due to reports of the operations of hired goons and private armies.

Need for private armies

Long-time Abra politicians said the existence of private armies in the province stems from the need of some people to protect themselves from tenuous rivalries that had characterized Abra politics.

Sandoy, a former commander of a private army of two Abra governors, traced the first known operation of political goons in the province to the early 1960s.

Now 56, Sandoy said the 1963 elections in Abra, where four mayors—whose family had been politically entrenched in the province—and former Defense Undersecretary Carmelo Barbero ran against each other for governor, was "the most violent" in the province.

He alleged that one armed group included former convicts from Bicutan.

"There were brawls almost every day as they could find their chosen enemies with the arms," Sandoy said.

Lakay Tuoyo, 84, a former radio practitioner, said the men were called "boali" because they operated canteen.

"To fight fire with fire and to balance the situation, [the other group] imported goons from Bicutan. They were mostly men with bad criminal records, those who were on parole and who were wanted. By the police," Sandoy said.

Accounts from some old Abra folk said several political supporters of the rival groups died during that election period.

Remembrance of things past

Nobody wanted to lose during that election," Lakay Tuoyo said, adding that one politician was tracked "by the bongoon" while his rival was suspected "by people from the 0 (Objective)."

But Lakay Tuoyo disputed accounts that many politically motivated deaths occurred in Abra at that time. "There were only rare occasions when people were killed because of politics," he said.

Abra Gov. Vicente Sidera, son of Jose Sidera, vividly remembers that election year.

"I remember very well when one armed group came storming by goons ... This was the time when political leaders would not want to go on the campaign trail anymore because it has," said Governor Sidera.

A former Abra assemblyman said survival made the mainstays of a private armed group a necessity.

"In response to the trend [of keeping goons] that was started [in the 1960s] ... mayors felt the need to have goons as well," he said.

"It was not really as if private armies were established out of a whim. There were maintained as a defense mechanism to what was happening at that time."

What is a private army?

Senator Roger Mercado, Pimentel, Abra police director, said the police had identified only one group in the province that would fit the "operational definition" of a PAC.

"There is only one group considered to operate like [private armies] paramilitary. Other politicians have maintain groups for security reasons," Mercado said.

According to Sidera, police define a PAC as "any organized group of three or more persons, which is armed with firearms and/or other deadly weapons and acts or is utilized to commit acts in violation of the law and/or human rights for purposes of engaging in or supporting a partisan political and/or economic activity."

Urban defined partisan political activity as an "act designed to promote the election or the defeat of particular candidate(s) in public office."

"Economic activity" on the other hand, is an "act designed to protect and/or advance the vested economic interest of a particular person or group of persons," he said.

Police said groups whose activities were "purely retricted to armed" were not considered PAGs.

At least two local officials said a scion of a politician here ordered the killings. Both said they maintained private armies to protect themselves from their political enemies.

One of them, Vladimir, 37, claimed that all Abra politicians maintained armed groups.

'Everyone has private army'

"Actually, all politicians here have their own private armies. Hindi sa mga demandahan dito [Lamentin arms's the room here]," he said.

Vladimir said he grew up witnessing violence and conflict, and eventually learned to live by the gun.

"The culture has made goons and private armies necessary here. Healing and killing would be rampant if people did not fear anyone," he said.

Sidera said he was aware that private armies existed in the province and these groups had not been dismantled.

"This measure hasn't been brought up to the authorities during the election period and even up to now," he said.

Sidera denied allegations by his political rivals that he was maintaining an armed group.

Asked whether it was important for an official in the province to maintain a private army, Sidera said, "If this matter is not checked now, then it will have a contagious effect on other municipalities in the province.

"I fear the day when everybody will be relying on goons, firearms, terrorism and threats just to those people will win elections," he said.

Sidera dismissed allegations that violence and the maintenance of PAC were part of Abra's "culture."

Governor disagrees

"I beg to disagree with that concept. Maybe 20 years ago, 40 years ago, that was the trend when it was a known fact that to our neighboring provinces, there were the so-called cabo-oks) (Kalinga-Apayao) because during the election (2004) that [we] had experienced true style of campaigning and style of maintaining again private armies in our would win," he said.

A police official said some armed groups did not resort to violence and, in fact, respected the police and the people in power.

"Ismael Jong any mga sendong 1963 dito (There are only a few without PAGs here)," said the official. "But most officials see them for protection when they travel, unlike the group that had been positively identified by the police. These men are used to harass rivals and to win elections. They have more than 40 members."

The official added: "Other goons of politicians are not killers."

He said it was only in Abra where even barangay captains and ordinary citizens joined the political bodyguards.

"In other provinces, only high-ranking politicians (ask for body-guards). The culture here is very different and most police officers who are not Abra natives are shocked by that practice when they are assigned here," the official said.

(Tomorrow: Private armies are parts in Abra politics)

Local politicians killed by suspected PAG members

NAME	POSITION	YEAR of DEATH
Romulo Quillat	Captain (mayor)	1998
Jesus Agcaoili Jr.	Barangay (councilor)	2000
Ronald Bulut	Vice SB president	2001
Leonardo Tuoyo Jr.	Captain (mayor)	2001
Charlie Martinez	Sangguniang Bayan president	2001
Clarence Bernardo	Tiong (mayor)	2002
Reginaldo Sandoy	Barangay captain (Lagangilang)	2003 (during the Iraq-Abra Valley Festival parade)
Jacqueline Quinsayas	Barangay captain (Lagangilang)	2003
Andrew Dao	Barangay captain (Lagangilang)	2003
Nancy Angel Balbuena Jr.	Barangay captain (Bangued)	2003
Nena Balbuena	Trades and an barangay captain (Lagangilang)	2003
Valentin Fullway	Barangay captain (Lagangilang)	2003
Jesus Bangga	Former barangay captain (Bangued)	2004
Ruben Rey	Former SB member	2004

(Source data: police)

ISOLATED armed but hardcore men agreed to have their picture taken—albeit not completely—by the Inquirer photographer as an undisclosed place in Abra.

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Church group formed to fight corruption

From page A1

(to) and conduct lifestyle checks on local officials.

According to Dela, contributing money to help address the fiscal crisis is a symbolic gesture "at best" because the problem is caused by corruption in the government.

Bernas Pilipino, which counts three bishops, a diocesan priest and lay volunteers among its members, was registered at the Securities and Exchange Commission on Aug. 27.

Its chair, Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, said the anti-corruption advocacy was the Church's response to the growing problem of graft and corruption.

"We will teach the people the principles that they will need to pursue their advocacy. I know that the work will be very difficult, and this is where faith comes in," he said.

Vidal officiated at the launching of the first of a series of assemblies on Aug. 29 at the Ecotech Center in Barangay Lubog, Cebu City.

In a speech, Bishop Claro Tagle of the Imus Diocese said the Filipino people needed "a conversion, or a new way of looking at things."

"We must be open to change," Tagle said. "In general, 60 percent of those who commit crimes in the Philippines are baptized Christians. This is a serious thing to ponder on."

Consolidated group

In Manila, President Macapagal-Arroyo merged the Transparency Group with the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission, which will now be the lead agency to conduct lifestyle checks on government officials and personnel.

"They are two different groups so I have decided to consolidate them," she said yesterday at a breakfast forum of the Manila Overseas Press Club.

Ms Arroyo appointed Defense Undersecretary Constancio de Guzman as new chair of the PAGC, and lawyer Nick Conti, an assistant secretary at the Office of the President who is in charge of the Transparency Group's lifestyle checks, as a member.

De Guzman replaced Dante Santos, who was recently named prosecutor general.

Also a longtime aide of Mr Arroyo's, having served with her at the Department of Trade and Industry. He was appointment secretary before the was named to the Department of National Defense.

Conti was Malacañang Palace's deputy at the Transparency Group when the latter was still Ms Arroyo's chief of staff. Tighe has also been named head of the Presidential Management Staff.

It was Gozo who examined the statements of assets and liabilities of government officials and personnel, which were made the basis for the lifestyle checks.

Those with questionable assets or lifestyles vis a vis their salaries were investigated and charged with graft before the Ombudsman.

Mr Arroyo said the PAGC was playing an important part in her campaign against corruption in the government.

She said that like the Office of the Ombudsman, the PAGC needed more investigators, prosecutors and security task of assisting our corrupt officials and personnel.

'Now form of politics'

Bernas Pilipino intends to pursue an advocacy called "Church-based and Church-initiated but not Church-limited," Dela said.

"The country needs a new form of politics wherein leaders render genuine, humble service, wherein power and authority are balanced by humility and responsibility. To be a church of the poor is to fight corruption," he said.

State auditor Heidi Mendoza of the Commission on Audit is assisting Vidal in the group's anti-corruption advocacy.

She said Bernas Pilipino members would be trained to become not only effective partners in the anti-corruption program but also vigilant in the disbursement of government funds.

"The Church can be a strong front against corruption because it can tackle moral reform programs which are the only truth-oriented reforms. Now, with the faith dimension, people will constantly be in touch with their conscience," said Mendoza, author of the book, "A guide to the investigation of commercial/economic fraud and irregularities," and a member of the Transparency Group.

Periodic cycle

In his homily during the launch, Vidal said that while the Filipinos had lived through a number of triumphs, their deliverers would not stop to this generation or even in the near.

"Similar have turned cynical over the cycle of euphoria and depression our nation periodically undergoes. But real salvation is long-term," he said.

Bernas Pilipino spokesperson Heidi Hulshoff said a core screening process had been put in place.

Volunteers who want to join the anti-corruption group will need the recommendation of any of the members, and the board of trustees—which includes Bishops Tagle and Tony Ledesma of the Ipil Diocese in Zamboanga del Sur—will be consulted before they are accepted, Hulshoff said.

He also said the group was solely relying on donations and membership pledges from members, "which also have to be screened."

Many of the leaders of Bernas Pilipino belonged to the now defunct Oratorio for Judicial Independence, a multisectoral group that took up the cudgels for Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. when impeachment charges were filed against him last year. With a report from Julito Lobog-Jarollano in Manila

Plaints, lobbying holding up PNP revamp

By Christine V. Esguerra

WHAT'S keeping up top Palace officials from completing the revamp of the Philippine National Police?

Officials promised last week to announce new appointments in the six-month administration but few days have elapsed, the announcement has had to go through last-minute revisions, owing to complaints and lobbying by police generals, and some technical hitches.

"It's having a tough time appointing the people he wants," said a senior police official. "Sometimes his hands are tied because there are some top officials lobbying for their own men. Worse, there's also Malacañang, which has the last say."

Even his predecessor, retired Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr., had requested Agbayani to allow some members of Philippine Military Academy Class 1981 to occupy some choice positions, the officer said.

Considered Ebdane's "favorite," the batch includes former Supt. Innocencio Alex Bustinguiche and Alan Purisima, chief of the Police Anti-Crime Emergency Response (Pacer) team.

Another senior officer pointed out a number of appointees who were dismissed in the alleged preferential treatment that some members of PMA '81 had been enjoying.

Another problem hounding Agbayani, the officer claimed, is retired senior generals who were not happy with the new assignments Agbayani and the former 19 Gens Raymundo and Pomeroso feared had initially lined up for them.

For instance, he said, there are some Metro Manila-based officials who didn't want to accept posts to be flung regions like Caraga in Mindanao. Having held key positions, they considered provincial appointments not appropriate in their career, he said.

A member of the 1978B, who is also a general, chided the officers for what he considered their unprofessional attitude.

"Why choose?" he told the insiders. "We're supposed to be professional, officers here. They should consider all appointments as a stepping stone for better positions in the future. But everything should be based on their performance."

The general said those officers should abandon their "cry baby" mentality that purportedly kept them from accepting with an open mind whatever positions their bosses deemed suited for them.

The general explained that the growing man-delayed primarily by the lack of civil service eligibility of some officials up for promotion.

He also cited the cases of officers like Chief Supt. Innocencio Marcelo Mesarez and Victor Lago who have less than a year left in the service.

Since Asuncion is set to reach his mandatory retirement age of 56 in August next year and Lago 114 days later, they cannot be promoted to the rank of director (two-star general), he said.

But the official said the PNP leadership had already looked into complications. He said Agbayani might announce the revamp within the week.

SC junks heinous crime courts to protect judges

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court has abolished heinous crime courts in an effort to stop the killing of judges all over the country.

In a two-page resolution dated Aug. 24, the tribunal approved several measures to secure the security of judges, including the revocation of the 1994 administrative order that created heinous crime courts.

"The order is hereby revoked owing to the relatively low caseloads in the said courts and considering that the current setup makes a heinous crime court judge really idle/inactive, making him/her an easy prey to would-be litigants," the high tribunal said.

It said that regional trial courts would now handle heinous crimes.

The tribunal issued its resolution after two judges were killed last month and in June, raising the number of magistrates killed in the last five years to seven.

The Supreme Court said that judges should have "special processing privileges" when asking the Philippine National Police to allow them to carry guns outside their homes and offices.

It said the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) planned a recruitment drive, former PNP chief Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. to grant the request of judges to carry firearms.

The tribunal reminded the PNP that, under the Revised Administrative Code, judges are not required to secure permits to carry firearms outside their homes.

DFA: Iraq still unsafe for Pinoy workers

By TJ Burgonio

A PHILIPPINE security-monitoring team to the Middle East said it was not yet "100 percent" safe for Filipinos to work in Iraq, hence, the ban on deployment of workers there stays.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo issued the statement Monday following reports that 24 Filipinos managed to slip into Iraq and find work in US military camps despite the existing ban.

"Ultimately it has to be our Middle East Preparedness Team (MEPT), together with Charge d'Affaires [Rolando] Endaya, who will give us the word. Until we are assured of the safety and security of all Filipinos there, the ban on deployment, including truck drivers, should remain," Romulo said.

Endaya is vice chair of the MEPT.

The entry of 24 Filipinos into Iraq was equated by an inter-agency committee tasked to review the partial lifting of the ban on workers who want to work in US-run Camps Anaconda and Victory in Baghdad.

The country has existing agreements with Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Kuwait to stop Filipino truck drivers from crossing their borders into Iraq.

Romulo stressed that the chief consideration for the complete lifting of the ban is the security and safety of the welfare and security of the Filipino workers there.

"Obviously, when their safety is assured then we will talk about lifting the ban," he said.

Heeding the issuance of a clearance by the MEPT, Endaya stated the week after of Filipinos to provide any form of assistance and to assure them that the Department of Foreign Affairs was ready to repatriate them should they decide to come here.

The ban on the deployment of workers to Iraq was imposed in April and lifted on July 3. It was interposed nine days later after Iraqi militants seized Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz, with Anthony G. Alfaro, POI Middleman threaten

American traders' group warns on tax amnesty bill

THE American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Inc. has warned that the proposed tax amnesty bill in Congress "unduly favors the tax evaders and is fraught with opportunities to honest taxpayers."

In a letter to the House ways and means committee, the chamber zeroed in on a provision that requires persons earning P100,000 and more per year to file statements of assets, liabilities and net worth.

"The forced filing of the statements of assets, liabilities and net worth is an unnecessary requirement or a burden to middle income salaried taxpayers who diligently pay taxes by payroll deduction," said letter-lister taxes and non-BIR committee chair Celia Hord to the letter.

Hord said there was universal concern about the handling, management and keeping of the SALN by the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

"Unless the serious breaches of confidentiality will certainly discourage taxpayers to disclose all their assets and reveal their true net worth in the statements," Hord said.

She said the filing of SALN could be used by organized crime syndicates to target victims for kidnapping and robbery.

"The filing of the statements of assets, liabilities and net worth would just make it easier for kidnappers and robbers to select their targets," Hord said.

As of press time, legislators were debating the merits of requiring the filing of SALN with Rep. Salacnib Baterina (Lakas, Davao Sur) saying it was unconstitutional.

Baterina said the provision would in effect violate a person's right against self-incrimination.

Carlito Pablo

Journalism grants available at Ateneo

EIGHT fellowship grants will be awarded by the Konrad Adenauer Center for Journalism (CFJ) at the Ateneo de Manila University to working journalists interested in pursuing a master's degree in journalism.

The CFJ fellowships for the master's degree are granted to full-time staff members of a news organization in Asia and the Pacific Islands. Applicants are screened on the basis of their professional and academic record, and reasons more in journalism and leadership qualities. A grant covers tuition and expenses for books, travel and accommodations.

Eighteen journalists from six countries have received the fellowship since it was established in June 2000, which coincided with the launch of its 12-course distance learning program leading to an M.A. in Journalism.

For the first semester of the present school year, eight journalists—one each from Sri Lanka and China, two from Malaysia and four from the Philippines—received fellowships.

Ateneo's M.A. Journalism program is distinctive for its innovative use of online and non-conventional learning methods. With most of the courses conducted online, working journalists and other professionals in the program are able to study at their own pace, and in their own homes or workplaces.

Application forms may be downloaded from http://cfjateneo.edu or requested by e-mail at cfjateneo@admu.edu.ph. CFJ may also be contacted by phone at 631-926-2202 or 632-426-6001 (local 5215), or faxed at 632-926-5094.

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Leaner SEA Games on the cards

Economic crisis may force organizers to slash events in some calendared sports

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE POSSIBILITY of a pruned-down calendar in the 2005 Manila Southeast Asian Games looms large in the light of the prevailing economic crisis, but Philippine Olympic Committee president Cebu Dayrit stressed there's a need for a rational basis to slash events in certain sports.

Dayrit's announcement followed a call by Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain to reduce the number of events in the SEA Games in fit into a tight operating budget.

Buhain said this would help cut costs and find the country's medal standing in the same time.

"We should try to take out the events where we are weak and maintain only those where we can win gold," he said yesterday.

The PSC head added he would make a proposal to this effect during the SEA Games Federation meeting slated Oct. 11-12.

Dayrit, however, said improving the country's medal chances should not be used as a means to reduce the number of events in the SEAG calendar.

"We should not present it in such a way that it would appear we're merely trying to improve our chances," he said. "We should have a rational basis for putting on an event. And I think the current sevenink disciplines is very robust numerically so."

The SEAG federation has discussed, as early as March, the possibility of trimming the events in the biennial meet.

Expected to be affected by the reduction are big medal-event sports such as athletics, swimming, shooting, gymnastics and cycling. Athletics alone has 43 events.

The federation has approved the inclusion of 34 sports to the Manila Games, with weightlifting and most tennis expected to be included.

Dayrit said he said it might be possible for the budget to be reduced to P500 million, although he failed to state the impact of such cutdown on the scheduled repair of Games venues.

UKRAINE MEET

IM Paragua zeroes in on crown

Standings after round 14

10.5—GM R. Ponga (ET); 10—IM V. Ayapin (Ukraine), IM N. Dzhakhir (Russia); 9.5—IM A. Shahin (Russia); 8.5—IM D. Rodriguez (Chile); 7.5—GM O. Bilyavsky (Ukraine), IM A. Akobia (Ukraine); 6.5—GM Sergey Kalyagin (Russia); 6.5—IM I. Semkin (Armenia), GM O. Avanesyan (Russia)

ADVANCED on his second grandmaster norm, Mark Paragua is bent on claiming the Absolute Tournament crown in Alaska, Ukraine as well.

PARAGUA

The 20-year-old Filipino bested fellow IM Elias Cherekbaev of Armenia in the 14th and penultimate round to regain sole leadership in the 10-team field with 10.5 points, half a point ahead of fifth Petty Rizenbaev of Ukraine and Roman Overchkin of Russia.

Blocking Paragua's path in the title is Ukrainian IM Evgeni Ardushkin, who is out of the duo-race at 9.5 points.

A victory will make Paragua the first Filipino since the late GM Rosendo Balinas Jr. to win a tournament in a former republic of the defunct Soviet Union. Balinas did the trick in the Odessa tournament in 1976, earning him the GM title outright.

"It would be a big bonus if I reach my original target win only the GM norm," said Paragua through e-mail.

Rizenbaev, tied with the Filipino after 13 rounds, halved the game with Russian GM Pavel Ulanopgin while Overchkin stunned top-seed GM Pavlenko Mukhtarbek of Ukraine to stay in the hunt for the title and a GM berth.

INTERNATIONAL

Laoag elims set Sunday

THEIRS off its second outing overseas in the Visayas and Mindanao, the 2005 National Milo Marathon's search for the nation's top runners returns to Luzon with the staging this Sunday of the Laoag City eliminations run.

Stylishly Shrina and Rabin Godang loom as the top favorites in the race, but former Superguards veteran Rodolfo Tacadena could pose an upset.

In the women's class, all eyes will be on Elma Bulao.

The Laoag City race, the 11th leg of the Milo marathon, is organized by the provincial sports office headed by former Governor Mat Alvarez, the 2005 National Milo Marathon's search for the country's top runners returns to Luzon with the staging this Sunday of the Laoag City eliminations run.

Records is expecting about 6,000 participants to join the event.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos graced the launch of the race while former First Lady Imelda Marcos is expected to drop by during the marathon, which is held in partnership with Interwise Bank, Royal Manila, Cebu Pacific, adidas, Globe Fundphones and the Department of Tourism.

IM Paragua zeroes in . . .

Turn page A17

On thing going for Paragua is that Kamilov and Ovechkin are not supposed to qualify at infinite tie-breaking.

Kamilov, who will move Shinsuke, and Ovechkin, who will go up against Nino Bluvshtein of Georgia, only need draws to obtain GM norms.

Marlon Bernardino

RP-Burlington Youth squad lands in Group C with favorite S. Korea

ALL IF its manpower shortage was not enough, the RP-Burlington Youth team found itself in the toughest bracket of the 18th ABC (Asian Basketball Confederation) Junior Men's Championship slated Sept. 14-23 in Bangalore, India.

The Filipinos, missing eight marbanzas, wound up in Group C with the South Koreans, the Lithuanians and the Australia in the 16-nation tournament for players 18 years and under.

Singapore, Taiwan up to the Philippines in the Southeast Asia Basketball Association Junior Men's Championship held in Sarawak City last April, is in Group A with China, Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia.

Competing in Group B are Iran, Singapore, Japan and Chinese Taipei.

Reportedly here India availed to lightweight Group D with Qatar, Hong Kong and Yemen.

"Without my starters, Im worried about our

ROCKWAR Mamar (left) will be leading mikeal. ALEX BADAYOS

chances in Group C. Korea is tough as Iran while Lithuania is tall, big and strong," said RP coach Johnny Tan.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the quarterfinals, where they will be split into two groups.

Tan was referring to starters Reginar Mikeal, Jay-R Taywan, Jeson Mercado, Jeymo Casino, who are all playing in the ongoing NCAA tourney, and Bobi Antolin, who is now in the US. The five powered RP-Burlington Youth to a sweep of the Luzon qualifier.

Expected to step up for the nationals are 6'2 Erdan Abadiano, 6'1 Darryl Bautista, 6'1 Ronald Caninsag, 6'2 Jeby Cruz and 6'0 Angelo Gadiao who are all Bilibid first discoveries.

Though minus of the RP Youth's predecessor, Burlington tanks president Peter Tan and GM Buddy Tan knows given the go-signal for its participation in the meet.

"We're doing our best to prepare our boys mentally and physically for the big battle ahead," said Buddy Tan.

Lions, Cards dispute last Final Four berth

THE FINAL four spot of the NCAA men's basketball will be completed today as the San Beda Lions and the Mapua Cardinals fight for the last slot in the Ascenza Coliseum.

STANDINGS	W	L
Perpetual	10	4
JRU	10	4
Lyceum	8	5
San Beda	7	7
Mapua	7	7
EAC	7	7
JRU	4	10
St. Benilde	3	11

GAMES TODAY
(Ascenza Coliseum)
1 p.m.—Benilde
(battle for 3rd)
4 p.m.—San Beda
vs Mapua (Finals)

San Beda, Mapua and San Sebastian entered up in a three-way tie at the end of the eliminations round with 7-7 slates. However, only the Lions and the Cardinals will figure in the 4 p.m. knockout match due to their superior twice-to-beat quotients.

The Cardinals are tagged as the underdogs because they will play without their leading scorer, Irwin Ita. Mario. The fifth-year forward-center averages 16.1 points per game will serve his one-game suspension today after hitting Perpetual Help's Vladimir Joe in their last outing.

The winner of today's match will battle top-seed Perpetual Help (that is the semifinals on Friday. Philippine Christian University and Letran will struggle in the other game.

By virtue of their better elimination records, the Altas and the PCU Dolphins received a bye to wait in the Finals. They twin will later to provide twice-to-advance.

San Beda and Mapua split their eliminations games. The Cardinals proved steadier in the first round as they won from a 15-point deficit in the final quarter to secure a 68-65 win. Arjan Gordon

CHRISTIAN Standfast and the Mapua Cardinals prepare for the last semifinal slot against the San Beda Red Lions. ALEX BADAYOS

rejuvenated with 23 points as the Lions rejected revenge in the second round with a 79-75 decision.

While Mapua is vying for a second straight shot at the semis, San Beda is eyeing its first Final Four appearance in seven years. Jasmine Mapa

CEU cagers barge into semis

LEYTE3 Sandoz squeezed into the Final Four with a resounding 77-54 victory over Holy Angel University at Angeles yesterday in the National Athletic Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities basketball tournament at the UM gym.

The Scorpions sealed their ouster's semi-final berth after posting a 3-0 sweep, practically securing a place in the next round along with Emilio Aguinaldo College and St. Clare College of Caloocan.

CEU held Holy Angel, which slumped to 1-1-1, to just four points in the first quarter and nine in the second half.

Dexter Castillo registered with 16 points for the Scorpions, while Jhun Macasaet added 14 points aside from grabbing eight rebounds and tossing six assists.

In the other game, three-time champion University of Manila boosted its unbeaten streak to 3-0 by zooming through Lyceum of the Philippines University, 85-66. The Hawks are now 17-0 since 2001, the year the league started.

The Eagles fell to 0-4 and failed to snag a Final Four berth, although they remained in fourth place, half a game in front of University of Makati.

UMak dropped a 102-95 decision to New Era University yesterday to bow out of the running for the semis. The Warriors (7-2 and semifinals sweep their three remaining games to gain a playoff for the last semi berth.

Marc Anthony Reyes

STANDINGS	W	L
EAC	14	0
St. Clare	11	0
CEU	8	0
PLP	5	6
UMak	8	7
MCU	6	7
PMPA	6	8
EU	1	12
HAU	1	14

GAME RESULTS (Day 5 of 7)
(Ateneo de Cubao vs CEU)
(Lyceum vs EAC)
(vs St. Clare)
(Mapua vs Perpetual)

RP's Gabi main fighter in WBC convention

SO WHO'S Hogaddik Wangpoghum? Why are his countrymen in Thailand crazy over him?

It was not Interior Minister Purpisteong who won the fight on his weight boxing gold medal for his country in the Athens Olympics.

Nor has he ever heard of Wangpoghum, and neither do you know who Chokchai Chai is.

Listen. Wangpoghum is Thailand's hottest boxing property, a national treasure that's more illustrious than star twin Marco Pacquino.

He was the same fellow who had 10% Shiloh Tabacon in March 2004 to capture the World Boxing Council Strawweight crown.

He has made a total of 13, repeat: 13, title defenses.

He has, in short, been elevated as Thai national sports hero, the reason the good looking Wangpoghum, 27, is being offered as senior prince fighter to next month's WBC convention in Phuket, a fabulous recreation capital.

***

Now the big news: Gabi, 24, has been picked to challenge Wangpoghum.

This could be the first time you've heard of Gabi.

Nasty free to suspect he's being offered as a sacrificial lamb, a gift for Our Thai world champ and his countrymen to highlight the annual WBC fiesta.

Gabi, a native of Davao and more an adopted son of North Cotabato, has earned the mark as the world title as the WBC international flyweight titlist.

That means he's the best among WBC flyweights ranked 11th down, but Eric Manny Pinol of North Cotabato, whose brother Rodrigo, manages Gabi, was quick to add that their fighter's title officials ranked 10th in the WBC.

***

Gabi, a southpaw like the Thai champ, has a 20-2-1 win-loss-draw record with 16 knockouts.

Wangpoghum is 62-2, with 29 KOs.

Needless to say Gabi will enter the ring an unfavored underdog.

Governor Pilod, during a meeting with GMA officials headed by GM Jose Sulaiman on Wednesday said all he could promise is that Gabi will provide a great challenge.

Pilod said the Thai is a terrific Isko Salitan who rolled over Tabacon like a locomotive for a merciless first-round TKO stand in Phuket, Thailand. Brave point taps, Pilod said they are preparing a special strategy.

He was scheduled to watch Gabi spar scorer day noon at the LAM Gym where the WBC international flyweight champ has been training under Rolney Hernandez, Benjamin's Filipino handler.

Pilod said he's very thankful to Team Dynamite for its wholehearted support to Gabi's title quest.

***

To match the duels: Oct. 8, Friday.

The National Broadcasting Network will cover the championship.

Wangpoghum could, indeed, loom awesome, but Gabi is no stranger to insurmountable odds.

Only his brothers thought he had a chance against the fire-breathing Randy Mangubat, whom he later outclassed to take the WBC international crown in Kidapawan last year.

Shortly before the last presidential polls, Gabi stopped a tough Thai challenger in five rounds, also in Kidapawan.

Gabi was the same fellow described by Quintin Antoon by the great American Cuban Emmanuel Steward as very talented.

Yes, Wangpoghum has impressive credentials as a hard-hitting and nothing his foes early.

But then, Gabi, also known as Prince, could be slippery as an eel.

He mail the Thai boxing celebrity current dope to him what he had done to Tabacon.

Gabi appeared eager and ready to upset the easier Bangkok-ed Thailand.

***

GOLF BYETS. Pentz Bingo Alfredo Mailing-bayan, parish priest of Lipa City: "We are now in the third year of our annual Lipa Cathedral Fund Raising Golf Tournament. The past two years were successful in terms of participation and net proceeds for the San Sebastian Cathedral Pipe Organ Foundation. This year, proceeds of the golf tournament scheduled at the Muhaiyat Golf and Country Club in Lipa will go to the construction of a second confessional hall at the San Sebastian Retreat House. Tee-off will be at 8 a.m. on Friday, Sept. 17. For participation, please call Jun Sebastian Cathedral (043) 756-2402 loc. 1 or 2.")

BARE EYE

Ricardo Trinidad

Revive antismuggle bodies, businessmen urge Gloria

BUSINESS groups are questioning President Macapagal-Arroyo's move abolishing three key antismuggling bodies last month despite the continued influx into the country of cheap and substandard goods for which no duties are paid.

In a letter to the President, the Federation of Philippine Industries (FPI) and the Fair Trade Alliance (FTA) appealed for the revival of the Cabinet Oversight Committee on Smuggling (Cocss), the National Anti-Smuggling Task Force (NASTF) and the Antismuggling Intelligence and Investigation Center (Asiic) whose responsibilities were transferred to the Bureau of Customs on Aug. 25.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the President abolished the three bodies to give newly appointed Customs Commissioner Jorge Jereos up to seven months to prove himself.

The FPI and FTA said the three bodies, headed by Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, had been very effective in curbing smuggling, citing the 13.4 percent increase in customs collections to P60.157 billion in the first half of this year. *Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.*

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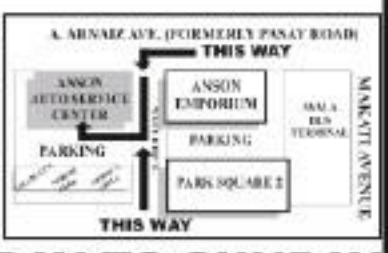

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After surgery, Clinton tells Kerry how to beat Bush

Tonet Jadaone
Inquirer Research

John Kerry and his bid to unseat President George W. Bush.

With Kerry badly in need of a boost after new polls showing him trailing Bush by double digits, reports of hints on the lobby were instead received as reports that Clinton had been giving Kerry advice from his hospital bed.

In part the image that Kerry was the one in need of the "warm up sessions," CNN political commentator William Schneider joked.

The New York Times reported that Kerry had enlisted senior Clinton advisers to help shore up his faltering campaign eight weeks ahead of the Nov. 2 elections.

Clinton, a chain-smoking workaholic whose family history of heart disease and passion for junk food had set him up for a heart attack in the near future, underwent a quadruple heart bypass operation to relieve arteries so severely clogged that doctors feared imminent danger of a major heart attack.

Shrdlogen in some unwise ways, "with over 90 percent," said Dr. Craig R. Smith, the surgeon who led the operation at New York-Presbyterian Hospital.

"There was a substantial likelihood that he would have had a substantial heart attack," said Dr. Allan Schwartz, chief of cardiology.

During his convalescence, Clinton's heart was stopped and he was put on a heart-lung machine for 71 minutes. That process, used for more than 75 percent of bypass patients, carries a small risk of stroke and neurological complications.

In a four-hour procedure, surgeons took blood vessels from Clinton's chest and left leg and attached them to arteries feeding his heart, creating detours for the bloodstream around segments dangerously clocked with plaque, the doctors at Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan said.

The team of 12 doctors, which included three surgeons, called the operation routine.

Magical touch

Throughout his career, Clinton, 58, has demonstrated an almost magical ability to find the spotlight, helping make him the only Democrat to be elected to the White House since Jimmy Carter in 1976.

His popularity with voters allowed him to survive sex scandals that led to his impeachment, and many Democrats blame presidential candidate Al Gore's 2000 election loss on Gore's decision early to distance himself from Clinton after the impeachment.

Clinton drew thousands of people on a brisk visit earlier this year to promote his best-selling autobiography "My Life," and was widely seen as the star of the show at July's Democratic national convention, overshadowing Kerry with a speech that electrified the party faithful.

Democratic party chair Terry McAuliffe said Clinton had been expected to make 10 appearances for Kerry in September and campaign extensively for him in Greece, the New York Times said.

In a 90-minute conversation from the hospital on Saturday, the former president told Kerry to stop focusing on his senate in the Vietnam War and instead attack Bush on job creation and health care, the paper said.

Bush leads by double digits

The report said there was rising concern among Democrats about the state of the Kerry campaign. There has been criticism that Kerry was slow to respond to attacks on his military record and to counter Bush on domestic politics.

According to a poll in Minnesota's Hennepin tie, Bush would receive Kerry by a 54-43 percent margin in a head-to-head matchup held right now. Newsweek magazine also showed Bush with a double-digit lead.

The pollsters built a huge bounce for Bush after last week's Republican national convention, where the US president pledged to continue the war on terrorism.

Until the convention, repeated polls showed Bush and Kerry to be in a neck-and-neck race with US voters sharply divided.

Doctors said the burger-guzzling Clinton would have to watch his diet in the future if he wanted to stay out of hospital.

Clinton is expected to make a full recovery and live a normal life, doctors said, but the days of burgers and French fries that marked his presidency will likely be striking of the past.

"His lifestyle diet is going to play a major role in preventing recurrence," Schwartz said.

Fears of heart attack

Clinton had lost weight recently thanks to a popular Ch'ikin Nut Nutritional Center said that his heart had become "badly blocked" over time, and that he was on the way to an imminent heart attack when he was admitted Friday.

"The pressure of the arteries to his heart showed extensive blockage in each of the vessels supplying blood," said Schwartz.

Speaking to CNN on Friday, Clinton admitted his appetite for fast food may have contributed to his current predicament.

"Some of this is genetic and I may have done some damage in those years when I was too careless about what I ate," he said.

Doctors said Clinton's return to full health would take weeks.

Clinton also had high blood pressure and that too have been adequately treated for high cholesterol. Doctors said he was put on a cholesterol-lowering drug a few days ago. Clinton was prescribed cholesterol medicine in 2000 as he was leaving office.

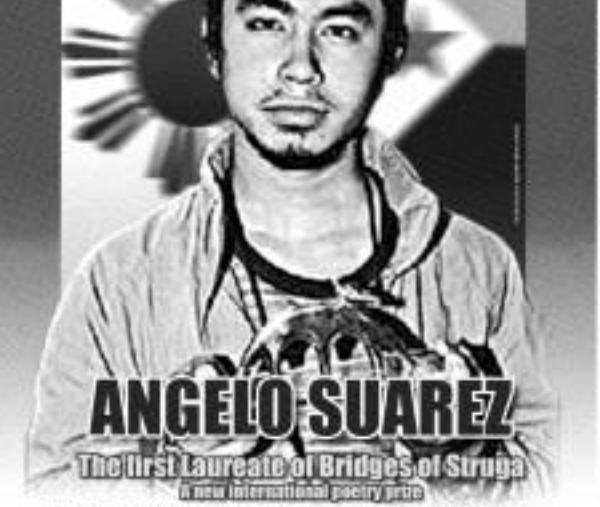
Campaign trail

"These past few days have been a time on emotional rollercoaster for us," Clinton's wife, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, said. "The president's operation and faith will carry him through the difficult weeks and months ahead—of that we have no doubt."

Clinton went to the hospital after complaining of chest pain and shortness of breath, but doctors revealed that he'd had these symptoms by several months. They said he had blamed them on heartburn.

DR. CRAIG R. Smith of the New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center uses a model of a human heart to explain to reporters the heart bypass surgery he performed on former US President Bill Clinton on Monday. At right, Bill Clinton jogs in Washington in this Sept. 11, 1994 file photo. The former US president had a successful quadruple heart bypass operation on Monday to relieve clogged arteries.

MABUHAY ANG PILIPINO!



ANGELO SUAREZ
The first Laureate of Bridges of Struga
A new international poetry prize

Angelo Suarez, a nineteen-year-old, fourth-year literature student of the University of Santo Tomas, is the first Laureate of Bridges of Struga, a new international poetry prize. Created by the international festival Struga Poetry Evenings in cooperation with Unesco - United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, the prize was awarded during the festival which was held from August 25-28, 2004 in Struga, Macedonia. Suarez received the award for his poetry collection, "The Nymph of MTV" (UST Publishing House) and was chosen from among 24 candidates from 15 member countries of Unesco.

MOTOLITE
MAS PANGMATAGALAN

BAYANIHAN FUND
Militants call on businessmen and civic-minded Filipinos to give the money to those who need it most—the country's rural poor populations. The call was announced by at a press conference in Quezon City.

Inquirer file photo

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Inquirer file photo

Reforming Muslim schools on GMA agenda

BRUNEI'S Crown Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah makes his wedding vows during a ceremony in Bandar Seri Begawan on Saturday. AFP

One of Asia's grandest weddings . . .

Megawati Sukarnoputri. The Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"The royal wedding will showcase ancient traditions which have been observed for generations. It is a combination of Muslim and ancient cultures that belong to us," Brunei information officer Musa Mohidin told AFP.

Brunei traces its beginnings 1,000 years back to Hindu empire, but its rulers converted to Islam in 1371, it fell under British rule in the 19th century and gained independence in 1984.

Fireworks

The 34-day jamboree bodes to dazzle even the owners, pause and his bride hold court together at the throne chamber of the riverside palace tomorrow.

After the ceremonies, the couple will ride a limousine convoy of two a golden royal carriage in the grand procession across the capital.

Bandar Seri Begawan is bedecked with banners and billboards proclaiming divine blessings for the newlyweds.

Fireworks will light up the Brunei sky for three successive nights starting Friday, and popular performers from neighboring Malaysia will host musical variety shows.

Internet Brunei has also opened betting whether the bride's dress and bouquet would be studded with diamonds, like those of the sultan's daughter Princess Hajjah when she got married in 1997.

But for sure, sources said, the couple's guestroom will be made of fabric covered with gold thread.

Dress code

The office of the sultan has not released information on the banquet menu, although wine is definitely out because Brunei is an Islamic society.

Since Thursday's ceremonies will be held in the daytime, protocol guidelines require all guests outside of the royal family to wear dark-colored clothes. The royals are free to wear garments of any color to set them apart.

During the banquet, which will be held at night, all guests should be dressed in white, again except for the royal family.

As the palatial Empire Hotel on the city's fringes, staff yesterday stepped up preparations for the guests, including the Duke of Gloucester and two Saudi princes.

Sources said Bahrain's king and his entourage have booked the $13,000-a-night Emperor's Suite, and the best room experts say, the Emperor Suite.

Japan's Prince Naruhito, who is coming alone after Princess Masako decided to skip the wedding due to health reasons, is staying at the presidential suite, the third most expensive room.

The government bodies will occupy lower tier but still expensive spots and, a source familiar with the arrangements told AFP "each VIP guest will be assigned his or her own butler." AFP

Not a question . . .

Lit and cuboville—including her brother-in-law, her sons' wives and her two granddaughters, plus their nannies—on the seven days she was in China.

"Philippine culture is based on family, and I have such little quality time with my family considering my heavy workload," the President said yesterday at the Malacañang Press Club's breakfast forum.

On top of which, she added, obviously unruffled by criticism that she had turned the event into a family reunion, "it did not cost the government a [single] centavo."

But Malacañang continued to hold back disclosure of the exact amount spent on the China trip. The Palace says but said the family encourages watchers the official party was a "private matter."

"Personal family decision" was how deputy presidential spokesperson Ricardo Saludo put it. "The question of who is the family goes to a question for the family because it is their expense and not the government's," Saludo said during a press briefing at on yesterday.

Saludo didn't look into the personal affairs of every person who went abroad, he said. "We should accord the same privacy to the First Family. [provided] they do not use government funds."

Asked about the propriety of the First Family first Channing their wealth, Saludo said: "I don't think [the President] did that to show off. She did that because of a family decision to be together."

He insisted that the time had been "unlabored in the pains that it is no longer helpful to public policy."

The much-awaited statement of expenses would be released only after the Commission on Audit had gone through the details, Saludo said. Meanwhile, he assured reporters: "Spending for the trip was an asset, and probably less, than previous trips undertaken by the government."

But he had no data to support this claim.

Although family members had previously joined presidential foreign travels, the China trip caused a stir because it came on the heels of Ms Arroyo's repeated calls for austerity, including cutting government travel expenses.

Miffed by the public censure, the President said the restrictions did not mean government officials could no longer go on foreign trips. "The travel ban is for those who use government money. If it's not government money, by all means go, because you support the travel industry. What we want to be austere about is government funds such as per diems, transportation and clothing allowances."

Ms Arroyo is scheduled to take only trip abroad for each of the remaining months of the year. She flies to Brunei tomorrow to attend a wedding in the sultan's family.

FREEDOM Mariapagal-Arroyo yesterday said she was attending the big social event in Brunei, less than she had other plans here.

Ms Arroyo announced an initiative to reform Muslim schools in Mindanao, with the help of Brunei, to deny Islamic militants a recruiting ground. She said the would be briefed at the University of Brunei.

"They have school programs for our students, at madrasahs (Islamic schools), to teach moderate Islam rather than fundamentalist Islam," she told a press conference.

Ms Arroyo considers the threat of Muslim militants as the country's No. 1 security threat following the wave of deadly bombings to resort years in the South.

Her security aides said certain Islamic schools financed by terrorists abroad preached hate and religious intolerance and served as fertile grounds for new recruits for the Jemaah Islamiyah, a franchisee Asia-based militant group blamed for the 2002 Bali, Indonesia, bombings that killed more than 200 people.

Arroyo said she would also meet with Brunei's 10-member contribution to an international committee, led by Malaysia, that is monitoring a ceasefire between the government and Muslim separatists. AFP

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The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gozon

Suicide blast kills 7 US Marines in Iraq

BAGHDAD—A suicide attacker sped up to a US military convoy outside Fallujah and detonated an explosives-packed vehicle, killing seven Marines and three Iraqi soldiers, US military officials said. It was the deadliest day for American forces in four months.

The force of the blast—in a dusty stretch of wasteland 14 km north of Fallujah, a hotbed of Sunni insurgents, unveiled two Humvee vehicles on Monday and hurled the suicide car's engine far from the site, witnesses and military officials said.

The bombing underscored the challenges that US commanders face in securing Fallujah and surrounding Anbar province, the heartland of a Sunni Muslim insurgency bent on driving coalition forces from the country.

US forces have set patrolled in Fallujah since ending a three-week siege of the city in April that had been aimed at rooting out militants. Insurgents have only reinforced their hold on Fallujah since then.

With Monday's deaths, 956 US service members have died since the beginning of military operations in Iraq in March 2003, according to a count by The Associated Press based on Pentagon figures.

The military condemned the bombing as "a desperate act of inhumanity" but insisted American troops would stay the course in Iraq until local forces were in a position to take over security operations. The slain Americans belonged to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, it said.

Hours after the attack, an unmanned US spy plane crashed in Fallujah, Aljezeera said, adding that witnesses picked up pieces of debris and danced in the streets, displaying pieces of the aircraft to reporters, witnesses said.

Since the Marine siege ended, gunmen have been using the city a base to manufacture car bombs and launch attacks on US and Iraqi government forces. Fallujah has become a virtual no-go zone for US troops. Although American warplanes have reportedly carried out air strikes against alleged militant safe houses there.

In Baghdad, US forces hunted insurgents loyal to radical Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr in the slum of Sadr City on Tuesday, killing at least 34 people.

US Army Capt. Brian O'Malley said the American soldier was killed by small arms fire and that several others were wounded when militants attacked US forces carrying out routine patrols.

In a senior Iraqi health ministry official said 23 people had been killed and 100 injured in the Sadr City clashes in the past 24 hours. He said 11 people died and 47 were wounded on Tuesday morning alone.

The renewed fighting came after a period of calm in the impoverished neighborhood after Sadr called on his followers last week to observe a ceasefire and announced that he planned to enter politics. AP

School raid involved months of planning

MOSCOW—Militants appear to have planned their seizure of a Russian school carefully, stashing months earlier and sneaking weapons into the building in advance. Still, some of the soldiers may not have known what they were getting into and were appalled to find they were holding children hostage.

There are indications that some of the shooting militants were killed by their own comrades.

Pieces of the picture of how militants took more than 1,000 hostages at the school in Beslan several months of cold, careful planning.

Officials are saying little publicly but Russian news reports citing unspecified but presumably official sources portray the raid as a hastily prepared operation ordering phase almost literally under authorities' noses.

School No. 1 in Beslan is only about 200 meters from the local police department headquarters.

"Why the law-enforcement bodies didn't know only they answer, but I'm sure a column of fighters got to the city past all checkpoints—this is something that can't be judged only through rumors," the newspaper Novaya Gazeta said Monday.

Russian news agencies cited unnamed security sources as saying that the planners of the raid were believed to have scouted at least two schools in Beslan.

Nudging by everything, they left the better one for their goals was the one that's big and in poor shape. I watch its half-basement communications passes, where the floor had to be replaced," the tsar-base news agency quoted a law enforcement official as saying.

"The Islamic wave able to be big and has reached a large quantity of weapons, ammunition, equipment and explosives, under the guise of planks, cement and other building material, enough to defend the seized place for a long period," news agency quoted the official as saying. AP

RELATIVES of victims of the Russian hostage siege mourn under a heavy rain at the cemetery in Beslan, North Ossetia, Sept. 8. AP

Putin rejects calls for talks with Chechen rebels

BESLAN, Russia—Mourners prepared caskets, wreaths and more chiseled tears to carry to the last graves in a cemetery for a third day of burials in this southern Russian town on Tuesday and Russian President Vladimir Putin denied a link between Russia's policies in Chechnya and the hostage-taking that claimed more than 350 lives.

In an interview late Monday with foreign journalists and academics, Putin again rejected Western calls for negotiations with Chechen rebel representatives, Britain's Guardian newspaper reported.

"Why don't you meet Osama bin Laden, invite him to Brussels or to the White House and negotiate, talk, ask him what he wants and give it to him so he leaves you in peace?" the Guardian quoted Putin as saying caustically.

"Yes, find it possible to set some limitations in your dealings with these bastards, so why should we talk to people who are child-killers?"

Putin said foreigners should learn to "see more questions about our policy in Chechnya" after the attackers shot children in the back, and said the Chechen cause was aimed at undermining all of southern Russia and majority-Muslim regions of the country.

"This is all about Russia's territorial integrity," Putin was quoted as saying.

He also said his government welcomed international assistance but not a public one—warning that a parliamentary probe could turn into "a political show." Top opposition politicians had called Monday for an investigation, including into the question of whether the authorities had prior information about planned terrorist attacks, and what the government was doing to stabilize the situation in Chechnya.

In Shalkhozhar, the North Ossetian capital about 30 km north of Beslan, hundreds of people gathered on central Freedom Square on Tuesday to protest against terrorism and to castigate local authorities for failing to prevent last month's tragedy.

"Corrupt authority is a source of terrorism," said a pastor told shouts in the crowd along with this was candles, which they lit and placed along the square, protesters distributed their calling for North Ossetian President Alexander Dzasokhov to step down. AP

Chechen war marked by violations of human rights

LONDON—In war-ravaged Chechnya, civilians disappear almost every day, seized from their homes by Russian forces who later dump bodies bearing the marks of torture, say human rights advocates.

The bloody conflict that forms the backdrop to last week's deadly school seizure and which some attacks blamed on Chechen fighters is marked by abuses that Amnesty International has labeled war crimes.

Russian troops who torture, rape and kill detainees in the separatist province are rarely investigated or punished, creating an atmosphere of lawlessness, say Amnesty and Human Rights Watch.

Years of fighting in Chechnya—the first war there raged from 1994 to 1996 and fighting started again in 1999—have been marked by atrocities committed by both Russian federal troops and Chechen rebels, observers say.

With disappearances and violence a daily occurrence in Chechnya, "the amount of anger and... intensity is growing," said Amnesty Peters, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Moscow office.

"In conditions like this, of course, rebels are able to manage very easily to recruit new fighters to their ranks and to easily find so-called martyrs who are willing to use explosive belts to blow themselves up," Amnesty said in a June report.

Both Human Rights Watch and Amnesty have warned about widespread abuses in Chechnya for years.

"Disappearances, arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial executions and attacks by armed opposition groups continue," Amnesty said in a June report. Such abuses, many of which constitute war crimes, are overwhelmingly committed with impunity, the majority of investigations which are undertaken are at best inconclusive and very few perpetrators are ever identified and brought to justice." AP

Israeli air strike leaves 14 militants dead

GAZA CITY Gaza Strip—Israeli helicopters attacked a Hamas training facility in Gaza City early Tuesday, killing at least 14 militants and wounding 70 others in the deadliest air strike on Palestinian militants in four years of violence.

The attack came a week after Hamas suicide bombers blew up two buses in the Israeli city of Beersheba, killing 16 people.

Hamas vowed revenge for Tuesday's air strike. Hours later, Palestinian militants fired rounds of mortars and homemade rockets at Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and Israeli towns bordering the coastal area. One Israeli in the border town of Sderot was lightly wounded in a rocket attack, rescue officials said.

The Israeli Army said it struck a field that Hamas used to train militants for firing mortars and rockets. In the past month, Hamas assembled a large bomb and a suicide bomber's explosive belt in the training camp, the army added.

In Gaza, children played home from school on Tuesday and shops remained closed on a day of mourning. Black armbands followed over the city as students burned tires in spontaneous demonstrations.

Mosque loudspeakers amplified eulogies from the Koran and announced that a joint funeral for the dead militants would begin at 2 p.m.

During the past four years of fighting, Israel has frequently targeted Palestinian militants through air strikes and other military operations.

But the strikes are usually aimed at easy-to-spot targets—usually senior members of the group or militants on their way to an attack.

In March, an Israeli strike killed Hamas founder and spiritual leader Ahmed Yassin. Three weeks later, in a similar air strike, the Army killed Yassin's successor, Abdel-Aziz Rantisi.

Tuesday's attack was the first time the army had targeted such a large gathering of militants.

The policy, which Israel calls "targeted killings," has enraged the Palestinians and drawn international condemnation, especially because of frequent civilian casualties.

In one of the deadliest attacks, Israel killed a Hamas military wing leader, Salah Shehadeh, along with 14 others, including nine children, in a July 2002 bombing by an F-16 aeroplane. The attack was supposed to kill only Shehadeh. AP

PALESTINIANS carry the body of one of the militants killed in an Israeli attack on a Hamas training camp during funerals in Gaza City. AP

Early return of Anwar to politics seen

ANWAR

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia's highest court on Tuesday began an appeals hearing that could soon newly freed former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's criminal record and allow him back into politics.

Anwar, 57, was walking in his hospital room three hours after successful back surgery Monday in Munich, Germany, to repair damage that he maintained was caused by a police beating in custody in 1998, aides said in statements.

The three-judge panel of the Federal Court unanimously dismissed prosecution objections to allowing a rare appeal of the court's earlier ruling that had upheld Anwar's conviction for corruption.

Anwar's attorneys immediately began arguing against the court's previous refusal to quash the conviction, issued when Anwar's foe, retired Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, was still in office.

But the hearings adjourned until Wednesday after the lawyers disputed among themselves whether to attack the original conviction as a political conspiracy or as mix to technical legal issues.

Anwar, contacted in Germany, gave the go-ahead to use the conspiracy theory, attorney Sankara Nair told reporters. But the legal team will need to refine in the court of its final plans on Wednesday.

If the conviction is eventually overturned, Anwar would be free of a five-year ban on future leave running for office or leading parties. AP

Hurricane leaves Florida in shambles, threatens Georgia

TAMPA, Florida—"Frances" complexed its two-day assault on Florida, leaving storm-weary residents Tuesday with flooding, frayed nerves and long lines for everyday items such as gas, ice and water. At least 10 deaths were blamed on the storm in Florida and Georgia.

At least 2 million people had no power in Florida and more than 40,000 more were without electricity in Georgia because of winds that downed trees, limbs and power lines. Schools in 56 Georgia counties were closed Tuesday.

The monster hurricane had weakened to a tropical depression early Tuesday and was pouring up to 12.7 more inches overnight in central Georgia, with another 5.08 to 10.16 expected. By evening, several tornadoes were reported in Georgia.

The storm roared Sunday in parts of Florida, forcing people to climb attics with axes amphibious tanks and close above a mile of a busy thoroughfare. More than 100 residents of a retirement home were rescued in wheelchairs as floodwaters climbed against their feet.

Residents of the Florida Peninsula withstood the tropical storm's heavy rain and winds of 104 kph on Labor Day, turning the holiday weekend that forced most of the state to deal with the storm and its aftermath.

Along the Atlantic coast, motorists waited for gasoline in lines stretching up to 8 km while there was heavy demand for water, ice and basic supplies. About 1,500 people gathered at a Wal-Mart in Palm Beach County while up the coast in Port Pierce, hundreds of people stood in a line with buckets and ice chests on a sunny morning of tension.

"This has been a long haul," said 66-year-old Judy Duffy of Fort Pierce, who searched with her husband for ice and water but drove away from a distribution line with an empty cooler. "It's tested my patience. I'm not a nice person today—I haven't had my coffee."

At a Florida Turnpike rest stop in West Palm Beach, an 8 km line of motorists waited for fuel.

Frances charged into Florida's east coast early Sunday ripping off roofs, smashing boats and flooding West Palm Beach streets up to knee-thighs under deep.

The hurricane did more damage to the Seminole Indian Center Club into storm in history, ripping an estimated 1,000 exterior panels from a building where quarantines are assembled. Its space churches were inside the building, but creator director James Kennedy said he feared the damage could set back Nasa's effort to continue double launches next spring.

Nine deaths in Florida were blamed on Frances, including a pensioner and a former son-in-law of Florida State University football coach Bobby Bowden, who died in a collision on a state highway.

And in Georgia, officials said an 18-month-old woman died Monday after the car she was riding in hydroplaned and overturned during the storm. There were two earlier deaths in the Bahamas, where Frances forced thousands from their homes.

AP

WORLDBRIEFS

China floods kill 100

SHANGHAI, China—Floods unleashed by torrential rains have killed at least 100 people and left dozens more missing in southwestern China, prompting authorities to put the disaster Three Gorges hydroelectric project on alert. Authorities called on more than 5,000 Army and Navy personnel to help after five days of storms and downpours in Sichuan province. An alert was issued for telephone centers after flood crests passed through the Three Gorges Dam along the flood swollen Yangtze River, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. More rains were expected, it said.

AP

Typhoon pounds Japan

TOKYO—A powerful typhoon pounded Japan's southern main island of Kyushu with heavy rains and strong winds Tuesday, forcing thousands to evacuate their homes and sending soil power to ruin a million households. Across the country 15 people were injured, Kyodo News reported, while 23 crew members of an Indonesian cargo ship were missing. Police said Coast Guard search planes and fishing vessels in the Sea of Japan were missing. Packing winds of up to 144 kph per hour, Typhoon "Songda" drenched the city of Nagasaki, about 800 km southwest of Tokyo, before it neared an area western Honshu, damaging luxury rains and un-touching fence winds in its path.

AP

'Ivan' threatens Caribbean

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados—Leaders braced for Hurricane "Ivan," scrambling just as short shutdown and bus water, just days after Hurricane "Frances" battered the Caribbean. Hurricane spawning Barbados Radio Authority eight-mile sustained winds of 190 kph. Forecasters warned the storm could strengthening Sunday. A hurricane warning was issued for Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada, and a tropical storm warning for St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, as well as Martinique.

AP

Doubts over ransom bid

PARIS—Experts on Islamic militant groups are skeptical about a Web posting demanding US$0 million in ransom for two French journalists held hostage in Iraq. France's prime minister said Monday, "We always treat such information seriously." Jean-Pierre Raffarin told RTL radio. But the new message "has prompted a lot of skepticism from experts." Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot disappeared Aug. 20 en route to the southern Iraqi city of Najaf. Intense negotiations by French diplomats and unidentified Muslim leaders Abdullah Jumbi and France's own large Muslim community raised hopes last week for the journalists' imminent release. The militants claiming to hold the two have demanded that France renounce a law banning Islamic head scarves from state schools. The ban went into effect as planned last week, and France has refused to back down.

AP

Unfinished business

TOKYO—A Japanese adventurer held hostage by Iraqi militants for a week in April said Tuesday she hopes to return to Iraq to continue her humanitarian work. "I think I'll go back. There is still a lot of unfinished business there for me," Nobuko Takato told the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan. Takato was one of three Japanese taken hostage by insurgents who threatened to burn them alive unless Tokyo withdrew its troops from Iraq. Two other Japanese were taken hostage separately in Iraq around the same time. Japan refused to withdraw its troops, and all five were later released unharmed.

AP

High on spider venom

SYDNEY—Females in an Australian prune harvesters sought breeding deadly redback spiders that they milked for venom to inject these wolves for a fight, according to government records. Four spiders—with venom that can kill children and the elderly with a single painful bite—were found to be in the harvesters exactly as men in New South Wales state on Feb. 16. Prosecutors claim the suspect received hand-fed spiders, which are common in Australia, in the prune variety. They kept the spiders in jars, milked them of venom which they diluted with water before injecting, opposition Liberal Party shadow police minister said. Andrew Rozenbaum said, "It just shows how comfortable they are—actually encouraging and in this case breeding their own source of venom. Their own source of drugs," Humphries told reporters, "in an attack on the Labor-led state government's law and order policies.

AP

INQUIRER

OPINION

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Oink (again)

EDITORIAL

THERE is a saying in the American South that the only part of the pig politicians don't use is the oink. Here is one he said that when it comes to the pork barrel of our legislators the only thing the people get is the oink.

A typical oink came from Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye who, in response to the loud public clamor to abolish the congressional pork barrel, issued a statement saying that really, the pork barrel isn't so bad. At a time when there is a groundswell of support for eliminating the pork barrel, a public feeling being shared even by a growing number of politicians, the last thing the country needs is an official defense of the pork barrel coming from Malacañang.

And yet it has been made, and we have heard this type of reasoning before: guns don't kill, people do; drinking and gambling don't destroy lives, drunkards and gamblers do. Which ignores the responsibility of the state to ensure that people aren't given the means to irresponsibly destroy their lives or that of others. When it comes to illegal drugs, for example, we may all agree to save the state by offering rehabilitation, but we also all agree to jail the pushers—which also means cracking down on trafficking in illegal drugs.

The same responsibility applies to the pork barrel, the most addictive and pernicious political drug there is, next to armed terrorism. Whatever good things may be said in defense of the pork barrel, the fact remains that it is not only a cause of corruption among politicians but it also fosters breaking the law among private contractors, civil servants, and promotes cynicism and selfishness among their countrymen. The pork barrel system as it has existed over the years, is so thoroughly rotten, so totally without merit or fiscal logic, that it must be eliminated completely.

Just how thoroughly corrupt and counterproductive the pork barrel has become is best illustrated by what foreign observers say of our politicians. Even jaded types point out that while the Philippines is far from being unusual in having so many politicians and contractors out to skim funds from the pork barrel, the greed of our politicians and their friends is without equal. There is simply no end to it. And reports such as those of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism indicate that the skimming of percentages has become quite institutionalized on a national level. Foreigners will tell any Filipino who will listen that the problem is that our politicians don't know when to stop, and neither do their friends.

Filipino expatriates who live in countries that also are notorious cases of corruption often say the same thing. The difference between our corruption, for example, and the crookedness that occurs in some of our neighboring countries, is that a P30-million road will be built in another country at a cost of P15 million, while here at home, we get a P1-million road after spending P10 million.

Should Malacañang then argue degrees of utility with varying shades of ambiguity, when to the rest of us and even some of our politicians who still have a conscience, everything is crystal clear? The pork barrel is bad. It is bad because it nourishes public service into an instrument for personal gain and cronyism as well as a source of corruption for both the public and private sectors. It is bad because it diverts our nation's resources into private pockets and by its very nature makes it easier to break the law than follow it. We can cheers on the anatomy of corruption all we want, but until the putrefying flesh is buried once and for all, it will stink.

There are rare times when public opinion is able to inspire our leaders to give up the instinct to retain power, and these are such times. And per what do we have, but an administration, which got the ball rolling by calling for a 40-percent cut in the pork barrel, now trying to stop the very momentum it tried to create. The public has to wonder at the kind of leadership that is able so lavish on to itself and its friends while the public, only to devote its energies to disproving any benefits from its own proposals.

Could it be that having succeeded in getting the Filipino people interested in addressing the looming fiscal crisis, Malacañang is now afraid of the results?

GMA not serious about tax reforms, graft, deficit

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

AT A FORUM where President Macapagal-Arroyo was being interviewed, I happened to sit with a group of Chinese businessmen who were with the presidential party in that venue. I filled the businessmen's flight to China. One of them immediately disagreed with my hint. A column about what transpired on board, where they reportedly contributed P350 million to what is now known as the Bayani-Isa Fund. "You never accept," he said. "It (the contribution) was not a matter of pride; it was a matter of fear."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, it was not voluntary contribution. It was more like extortion and extortion," he said. "We know we Chinese, we are easy to scare."

"That was the day version of a late holiday," another chimed in, "with the passengers on slide evacuation."

"Well, robbery is the next step after theft," said the first.

"Why, what's the difference between theft and robbery?" asked the second.

"Well," replied the first, "theft is what the congressmen have been doing with the pork barrel; robbery was what the hijackers just did."

"That was not simple robbery," a third joined in. "That was robbery in fund."

"It was really scary. There was no escape. I made several trips to the lavatory to escape notice, but every time I came out, he was still there pointing a finger at us and counting millions of pesos."

"I wanted to jump out of the plane, but it was flying at 35,000 feet."

I don't think the President is serious about tax reforms, reducing the budget deficit, and curbing graft and corruption. Malacañang just defended the pork barrel of legislators, the most glaring example of corruption and misuse of taxpayers' money and the same pork that she wanted cut by 40 percent and which the whole nation wants abolished completely. And the President herself announced that she has no intention of abolishing the pork barrel for the rich that rules in millions of pesos to profits, as many have proposed to help raise funds for the cash-strapped government. At the same time, she wants to increase and impose new taxes on the ordinary citizens who are already hard put making both ends meet. How can she do this?

So even the high priests who want to be tax-exempt will agree, the President and Congress have no moral right to increase taxes if the pork barrel in the whole government is not abolished, those who cut school in poor are taxed properly, and the government itself lightens its belt.

Not an all another and same," she keeps repeating to the people. But she says one thing and means another. It turns out that when she means by "sacrifice" is for the little people to contribute their hard-earned money to the bayanihan fund so she and her officials can spend it for their perks and privileges.

Should not the leaders lead in making sacrifices as the people will follow? Should not the President lead in this example by abolishing her own pork, the P4-billion intelligence and social fund? Anyway, Papers already reside in her social fund (P1 billion every year which is not included in the budget.

Instead of making sacrifices, she suggestedly stopped all foreign travel by public officials. But why did she increase by P20 million the Travel Fund in her proposed budget? At last, she herself is going on four more foreign trips before the year is over. She also has a shop to advertise herself. So government officers, but why did she increase the Advertising Fund? If the government is so short of funds that it has resorted to begging, why did she increase the budget of her spokesperson?

She doesn't have to ask the permission of the legislators to reduce the pork barrel. They do not deserve any of it. It is a graft-ridden benefit that they give themselves every year. Their job is to enact laws, not to usurp the functions of the Department of Public Works and Highways.

All she has to do is to remove the appropriations for the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF)—they will be restored by another name—from the budget and that's the end of it. Congress cannot put it back in because it cannot increase the proposed budget; it can only decrease it. To get even, Congress can remove all the pork in the executive budget, including abolishing the multi-billion funds (which are not audited) and the discretionary funds of the President and her Cabinet. He already have intelligence agencies in the military, the police and the Office of the National Security Adviser and other departments do not need any needless funds. So that levels the playing field and the legislators do not have to fear the President's veto pen.

By simply cutting all allowances by 10 percent, across the board, from the budget, GMA will be saving billions of pesos more.

Aling pantnos of our foreign debt is made up of loans passed on to the national government by government-owned or -controlled corporations (GOCCs). Suppose all one percent on at least P600 billion is equal to the budget deficit. Besides increasing power rates, which will bring more hardships to consumers, the same consumers will still be made to pay for those debts with the taxes they pay. They will be hit by a double whammy.

By Suspore officials are among the highest paid public officials. And they are not willing to give up any part of their perks. In private companies undergoing financial problems, executives voluntarily take pay cuts, but not public officials. They make small wage earners contribute to a bayanihan fund but are not willing to make their own sacrifices.

The cause is true of other GOCCs. But their executives are not willing to make sacrifices, either. Shouldn't they make sacrifices, too?

Isle of Tortuga

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

A COUPLE of things have happened over the last couple of months. The first is that Isla Mercancias has taken the place of Isla Perlas as head of the Videogame Regulatory Board and has been just as resident, and unemployed, about adding this part of the world of pirates. I read about Isla Mercancias in Vera Mall a couple of weeks ago in the Business section of the Inquirer. The editors had the good sense to keep it small, out of a very good sense of proportion, though I don't know how it fared in the entertainment pages.

The second thing that happened was that he normal time Vera Mall in the company of cops and confiscated the DVDs sundry amateurs were selling there. I know the place. I've been there. Though not as a customer of DVD, the reason for that being financial judgment rather than moral scruples. The Muslims in Quiapo sell the stuff much cheaper. But I have been to Vera Mall, as one point quite frequently, for the software and the SIM cities. The only reason I am no longer going there frequently is that I've shifted to DSL, the broadband Internet service, and can now procure both software having to leave Metro Manila's traffic. That is through the wonders of downloading. I'll get to that point later.

Anyway, Marianne stormed into Vera Mall and began tearing off the DVDs for sale on the stalls there to cops and carted the hot goods a lot of boxes and blazes and catcalls. He apparently took them all in pride, figuring wallets and scents might break his bones but not boxes and blazes and catcalls. But the latter took the equivalent of clicks and shouts at one point in the form of trumpeted pieces of paper that I believe which flew but way while he and company were shouting down the stairs.

That brought out the action star in him. He really ran up the stairs, drew out a gun, and pointed it at his interrogator, while passersby screamed and screamed for safety. He was not sure, as opposed to be rational, until he proceeded to descend the stairs again, when one of them shouted with any glee, "Sir, nakalagpas en ako sa iyo [Sir, I'll get back at you someday]."

The second thing that happened over the last couple of months is the remarkable explosion of (pirated) DVD titles. They now include not just the latest movies, but also the latest other countries as well, or at least movies from other countries that have reaped numerous awards. I remember saying in a column a year or so ago that my only misgiving about the pirated DVDs circulating in our midst was their quality. In short, I did not mean technical quality, though some of the stuff was absolutely wretched in that respect—even the ones that were already copied from DVDs and not ripped off from professional copies or from screenings in movie theaters, it had to do with the content of such pirated titles. Even latest titles, latest flat in theaters. What I meant by it was that the titles were largely or action-movie-lover's pastiche. Occasionally you found a "Cinema Paradiso" among the thrown-longed movies, but it was just that, occasionally. I say that that the days the "Picture of Dorian" (or a T-shirt I got for Christmas pun it) scattered there was a huge market out there for serious movies—indeed the day they began improving the public taste by pushing out movie classics instead of movie rejects—was the day their existence seemed to come more touched.

That day has come. These days you will not just find Sergio and Stallone and Van Damme on the stalls, you will find John Ford, Charlie Chaplin and Alfred Hitchcock there. You will even find Tempel Duncombe and D.W. Griffith, whose "Battleship Potemkin" and "Birth of a Nation" spawned the birth of movies on this battleship earth. Astonishingly, Idris Bustamante's works are simply represented. He was variously "Sarapen," "Kadenawan," "The Seven Samurai," "Red Bread," "The Hidden Fortress," "Throne of Blood" and "The Idiot." I don't know what other titles are. I've been looking for his "High and Low" but haven't found it yet.

More importantly you'll find movies from France, Spain and Germany, along with those from Taiwan, Taiwan, Iran, Greece and Thailand. You'll find such exotic titles as Amitosh Gosai's "Swades," Salvatore Giuliodi's "Malcomed ni Ang," Imir Kusturica's "Underground," Akbas Kiarostami's "Ten," and Rudolph Maté's "Vampyr." If you're not satisfied to do with his Ladies, it has to do with a girl who passes herself as a boy to find work in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.

The old Hollywood classics are there in profusion as well, including those movies withheld to us as a kid. "The Adventures of Robin Hood," "Scaramouche" and "The Three Musketeers." The last started from Sally who makes up her self-loving able to dance in the movie with a lot of Dartmouth never has if it wagnet been more frustratingly heroic.

The black and whites are there, and I'm personally curious how they fare. They include "Citizen Kane," "How Green Was My Valley," and "Casablanca." Those winners all. The old John Wayne movies are there as well, though I don't need to be a fan of his to enjoy them when I found his politics has overwhelmingly for my taste. It wasn't just his hawkish views on Vietnam, it was also his justification of blacks having inferior votes in Hollywood movies.

I need to say only a handful of people patronizing the pirated DVDs three years ago when they first appeared in Quiapo, Vera Mall and other places. Now there's always a crowd there, especially on weekends, including the mall-hooked. In fact, I have yet to enter any Vera Mall when I wanted or entered it when I haven't bought a pirated DVD in his or her life. Here no one, and I'll show you a coin or a fool.

What is to do in the face of this? What rational policy to pursue?

I know that for consensus

Why Cebu as second Malacañang?

ANALYSIS

Armando Doronila

CEBUANO AMBIGUITIES last June 30, President Arroyo's inaugural address bifurcated the inauguration into two ceremonies. She delivered her inaugural speech at the Quirino Grandstand in the Luneta, and a few hours later she took her oath of office in Cebu City.

When President Joseph Estrada was inaugurated on 30 June 30, 1998, he split the event by taking his oath in Barasoain Church, in Malolos, and delivered his inaugural speech in the Luneta. The splitting of Barasoain was symbolic because the church was the site of the first revolutionary Republic in 1898. He sought to give his election a historical significance by associating it with the Malolos Republic.

The significance he explained in his Luneta speech. "The common people have waited long for their turn, for their day in court," he said. "This day is here." Of the "new day of the Filipino revolution," one of their slogans in Pinoy Kasi chats.

President Arroyo had a different message when she took her oath before Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., himself a son of Cebu, in the shadow of the Basilica del Santo Niño de Cebu. Surrounded by Filipinos few national foreign personages including Ferdinand Magellan. The message was strongly interpreted. The obvious interpretation was that the Cebu segment was an expression of the "new day" that Estrada had proclaimed. Such that a million years—the unabashed 2M vote drills in Mindanao, Luzon and Mindanao.

In Cebu, she announced the city would be the Malacañang outside the national capital. The declaration was made at the Bureau of Customs, renamed into "Malacañang sa Sugbu," her residence in the south, as well as pure state office.

The truth is that it was not Cebu alone that generated the world that made its move that kept on shake up for her losses in Luzon and Mindanao. It is reasonable to conclude that it was the task of Corazon Vinpoa and Western Visayas that swept her to the presidency in May 2004.

During the inauguration, the enthusiasm and jubilation over her election were most pronounced in Cebu. While it seemed in Manila during the Luneta inaugural speech, there was anticlimax in Cebu and the viewers viewer low memorably passed from the historic report to the Cebu City center were heard by enthusiastic people, reflecting the manner over they gave her.

Their expressive welcome was reciprocated. The President and her party missed overnight in Cebu for the traditional diplomatic reception, and the dance dancing among the nations people in the evening.

The declaration of Cebu as an alternate seat of power outside Manila, albeit only just once, has a larger symbolic meaning than just an expression of gratitude over a decisive electoral support. It means that the President has given narrative confirmation of the historic role of Cebu not only as the second city of the Philippines, and not just in economic but more in historical terms. The reason for to Cebu is a tangible bow for the irreversible decentralization of the Philippines toward regional power, which is the devolution of power from Imperial Manila. It is symbolic of the gains of the regional movements symbolized in the Local Autonomy Act, a process that can no longer be reversed and that is waiting for formalization by a constitutional mandate for federalism, whose impetus is now gaining momentum.

Historically, of all Philippine cities and regions, Cebu has been the cradle of political leadership since the Philippines started on the road to self-government. It was in Cebu that Sergio Osmeña, one for the Philippine Assembly gave birth to a constellation of regional leaders, the most outstanding of whom were Manuel L. Quezon of Luzon and Sergio Osmeña Sr. of Cebu. In fact, Osmeña was the foremost Filipino leader during the days of the Philippine Assembly, when he was the acknowledged leader of the Nacionalista Party. Quezon, his early ally, finally had usurped the leadership from Osmeña in 1916, when he was elected Resident Commissioner to the United States.

The undeniable economic reality is that Cebu is where Manila's technical expertise for economic growth began to take hold. It has been a strong concentration of industries in the national Capital Region. Cebu is the undisputed stepping and an entrepot hub in the Visayas region and is the gateway to Mindanao. There are manufacturing firms in Mandaue, flanking the port area next to Lapu and to Mindanao as well as the Visayas. Despite the paucity of natural resources, Cebu has an extensive growth rate many times higher than the growth in Metro Manila. It is symbolic of the gains of this

Do your part to help country

I AM a full-time housewife with a reasonably full and comfortable life. We should be able to sit back, relax and enjoy the fruits of our labor but that's anyone should do something that may cost my life around and disrupt my family existence.

I am lonely, the President admitted that we are in a crisis. I believe her. Women who have managed families or companies do not admit to a crisis unless other options have been tried. It is even inhumane of why we have come to this point in our national life. Debates and finger-pointing have been our national sport and it's been an Olympic competition for this, we'd be the medal of the gold.

The question is what do we do now?

The initial answer is to ask: What will the government do? My answer to this is for total power's sake. In the past, we held power's nerve responsible for every bad thing that happened. It is time that we individually and collectively take responsibility for the wave we are in. But I did not do anything, some of you may independently reply. And that is probably the problem. We do not do anything serious to get involved in a problem in a deep and personal way. We are, after all, the silent majority.

A final crisis will affect our children's future. Governments may come and go but economics remains. We have to help our country.

When Thailand went into a crisis in 1997, its citizens gave baht, jewelry and gold loans to put their country back on a more stable footing. And Thailand has recovered. Why should we, Filipinos not do the same thing for the Philippines?

Those who feel as I do may write me at lilliangreggy@yahoo.com or call me at (063)(42)7777161. I am willing to be a one-woman secretariat for lilliansing Bagiti Pilipinas Charitable Anonimo, forming #1 ang Pilipinas). For myself I can offer eight hours of teaching English to underprivileged children for four hours who is an engineer and advertising executive of a big utilities firm may, I think, be convinced to reach volunteer or are as a citizen member of some of government's many development task and awards committees. Some of my dearest friends are willing to wear multiple jackets one day a week. My lawyer friends are willing to do pro bono legal assistance. My children are willing to do community work, even school cleaning if necessary. The fact is, if our drivers pick up passengers without being guilty of professionalism, we will be in the proper places, if we didn't throw garbage into our rivers, if the rich among us paid the proper taxes, if all of us just followed the laws, we would already be ahead.

I wish all like-minded Filipinos to call the rest of the country when it is their turn comment to do so that the privileges of membership, access rights and communities can fill up our national hope chest and bring us out of this crisis and into a brighter tomorrow soon.

—MARIA LILIBETH C. RAMOS JR.
Bayabas Village, Tayug, Rizal

Double whammy for motorists

LAST March 25 I reported a theft incident on Timog Avenue, Quezon City to the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Energy and, of course, Filipinas Shell for possible fraud.

Filipinas Shell purportedly assisted on it by carrying out an inspection audit in the presence of a Quezon City field inspector. As expected, they gave the gasoline station a "clean bill of health." Obviously, the Shell station management or inspection would be carried out until their spurious booger the element of surprise.

And now the worst news than the Quezon City mayor's office is spectators found more gasoline stations defrauding their customers? I think it is a shame that gasoline motorists have to cheat motorists.

Many I suspect the media to continue doing follow-ups on this matter to put pressure on local governments to go after unscrupulous gasoline dealers. The may just be "the tip of the iceberg."

The League of Mayors ought to get together and initiate collective checks on all gasoline stations in their respective localities and raise the penalties for this crime. Considering the volume of fuel sold every day by each and every gasoline dealer, the currently applicable penalties: fine of P400 is a pittance. The violators can easily recover the amounts after shortselling us here or four customers.

Mr. the consumers, are being hit by a double whammy here! We have to grudgingly accept the rising prices of petrochemical products, due to the decriminalized by the dealers is easily unexplainable.

It will be best if the supreme initiate a process to self-regulate and discipline their dealership cartels.

—FREDERICO CUELLO PE, Unit 304, C. Sanders Building, 111 Quezon Avenue, Quezon City

Unkind quip not Romulo's

I LOOK forward with keen interest to the announcement that came out in the business on former Foreign Affairs Secretary Roberto R. Romulo and I are commissioned to write in the interest of fairness and truth as far as my official involvement with Romulo is concerned. As the Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson during the Fiji Coup/Mutiny crisis, I had the opportunity to deal directly with Romulo in the course of the DFA's efforts to stop Commodore's overthrow.

It baffles me how how does one interpret, "why all the fuss over a dead" in Gonzalo Banal. It's an unseen just forgo. I could be accidental to Romulo. It was he himself who mobilized the whole DFA to explore big all formal and informal channels to assist Commodore.

Through the entire crisis, I never heard Romulo utter that statement, or any words of unsympathetic tone either. There was not one instance when he gave me and the DFA the impression that he was belittling Commodore's country as a country, for that matter, that of any Filipino by reason of his or her racial or economic status. I say this only in fairness to the man who took full responsibility and blame for the execution of the coup.

—ROMAN S. CASTAÑEDA, undersecretary, Office of Special Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, 2330 Roxas Blvd., Pasay City

Is the garbage dump legal?

COMMENTING on the safety of the Sitwasan Controlled Disposal Facility, former Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun wrote (PDI, 6/26/04) that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has been encouraging waste segregation at the Obando River and that only biodegradable waste will be henceforth brought to the dump.

But is the facility legal? Is the process ecologically sound?

The Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (RA 9003) prohibits garbage dumping and landfilling in flood-prone areas. Sitwasan and Obando are flood-prone areas.

The dump is supposedly a "controlled facility," meaning it used to be an open dump which is being upgraded in preparation for its eventual closure in 2006.

Sitwasan Mayor Toby Tiangco allows the dump to be open to the basis of a "Barrier to Proceed" issued by Gozun's Environment Secretary Generoso Elmore. Gozun's predecessor, the national Solid Waste Management Commission executive director Aileen Magadia, in answer to a query from a member of Sto.Niño Coalition, wrote "We would like to emphasize once again [our previous dated May 11, 2004] that the Notice to Proceed (NTP) issued to the Sitwasan CDF should not be construed as carte blanche. An NTP is just a letter that would contain a set of technical conditions imposed by RA 9003 for any proponent or operator of a particular solid waste management facility."

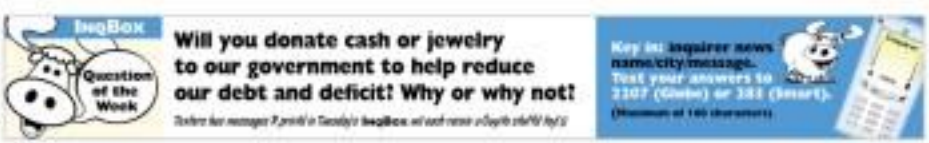
Reynaldo E. Mariano, chief of the Environmental Impact Assessment Division-Environmental Management Bureau, DENR wrote: "Based on our records, no application has been filed with this office concerning the Tanza dump project. If [it] is a controlled facility, please be informed that we don't issue ECCs (environment clearance certificates) for those dump facilities since they are not considered environmentally acceptable modes of waste disposal."

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources-Department of Agriculture, after obtaining and analyzing water samples taken from the vicinity of the dump, noted that the "disposal facility is a contributory factor in the pollution of the river, and commercial dumping of more wastes in the area could aggravate the deteriorating condition of the waters environment. Moreover, there is no final implications to aquatic life as well as to harmful effects on public health, closure of the facility is hereby recommended."

It is hard to depend on Gozun's promise on behalf of the connector, Philwe, that only biodegradable waste will be brought to Tanza. At present, some 170 trucks of mixed waste are collected from Manila alone.

We urge Mayors Tiangco and Lito Atienza to join up ecology warrior in the barangays, besieges clamors and Pier 18, acutely enforce water segregation at source (households, establishments) and segregated waste collection; and promote composting and recycling.

—JOEY C. PAPA, president, Bangon Kalikasan Movement, bangon_kalikasan@skyinet.net



Across the NATION
Newsstand Editor Tony Bergonia

Maguindanao cops nab 5 linked to SSS death claims scam

COTABATO CITY—Police on Tuesday arrested at least five people believed to be behind a syndicate involved in spurious death claims with the Social Security System (SSS).

PSG Edwin Mandilas, new investigator of Datang police in Maguindanao, identified the suspects as Tahir Otto, Sirlyn Mamalinta, 26; Bonifacio Gacilan, 41; Bonifacio Magbanua, 44; and Levy Gandalla, 28, all of Sanggay Tumbo, Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao.

The suspects allegedly forged documents and filed fraudulent claims with the SSS, including that of security guard Glenn Colasol.

Colasol found the scam when he went to the SSS office in Davao City to get a new identification card. At that time, he was told he was already dead based on SSS records and that his wife had already collected the death benefits.

The four women, Mandilas said, pretend to Otto as the nonrelatives. Otto used them to process the death claims for Colasol's beneficiary it was learned.

Mamalinta's photo appeared in the SSS clearance bearing the name of Jenna Colasol, the security guard's wife.

Mamalinta said Otto paid her P300 for agreeing that her photograph be used in the SSS clearance bearing Jenna's name.

Gacilan, Magbanua and Gandalla said Otto paid them for their participation in other claims filed with the SSS.

Valentino Pamaylan, branch manager of SSS-Cotabato, said he had ordered an independent investigation of the extent of involvement of the five suspects in the scam.

Pamaylan said the pension fund would not immediately release Colasol as its owner of record members. Colasol should first file a petition with a court, he said.

He should submit proof that he is alive and that he is the real Glenn Colasol, according to the SSS official. Edwin O. Fernandez, *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

INTERIOR FLOOD
Flooded area's residents noticing miseries on the floor of residents of Sta. Ana town in Pampanga.

Workers uncover GSIS loan scam

CITY OF IMUS (PDI)—Eleven employees of a senior district here who are applying for salary loans from the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) have learned that they already had housing loans of as much as P1 million although they do not have keys to those units, much less lots.

"I didn't know I got a housing loan," said Estrella Pineda, a maintenance worker for the last 13 years at the City of San Fernando-Water District.

Pineda said the GSIS central office in Pasay City last week confronted her "loan," including those that 10 of his co-workers supposedly got.

In Pineda's case, the principal of his loan supposedly made in 1998 totaled P259,000. This amount reached P988,326. Including surcharges, his total obligation to the GSIS as of July 31 has reached P825,391.34.

Because of that loan, which he said he never secured and never benefited from, the GSIS is now pulling him to pay P5,798 monthly, he said. His salary, he said, was only P9,000 a month.

"I don't have a house but I have this huge debt," Pineda said.

The houses are supposedly located in Royal Meadows, formerly Vita Villa, in Barangay Tanghi in Mexico town.

Roberto Bondoroy, a senior district inspector who is set to retire in three years, said he might lose his retirement benefits to what he called a "fraudulent loan."

Bondoroy said that when he checked his GSIS folder, the papers submitted for the housing loan bore fake signatures. The documents include his community tax certificate, police papers and the contract.

Cavey Lizares, a pump operator, said a syndicate could be behind these supposed loans. The syndicate, he said, might have a contact person in the mayor's office. "Gee, how did the syndicate manage to get copies of our real estate certificates and service records?"

Alejandro Bones, also a maintenance worker for the last 22 years, said the supposed home never obtained despite the lack of "clearance investigations."

"If that was done, the GSIS would have known we were not capable of paying the loan," he said.

In 1998, their monthly salaries totaled only between P5,000 and P6,000.

They said they had appealed to the GSIS to cancel the loans, but the agency insisted that they honor them. They were also told that they could get real illustrations of salary loans because of their position/designation.

The bayarans called the GSIS office in Pampanga twice to one, limit the central office's directory on the alleged dubious loans. In both calls, the operator connected to the hotline in the unit handling housing accounts but nobody took the calls. Rosario Ordoñez, *PDI Central Luzon Bureau*

100 teachers sue school execs over non-remittance

MORE than 100 teachers of a national high school in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, have filed administrative and criminal cases against six top officials of their school for allegedly failing to remit P22 million worth of their monthly contributions to various government financial agency offices.

Rosalie Lim, president of the Pagbabalang Samahan ng mga Guro Para sa Pag-unlad Republic Center (San Jose), said her fellow teachers at the Mina De Oro National High School were aghast after finding out that their respective land not been paying their contributions to the Government Service Insurance System, Philhealth and Pag-Ibig for nine years now.

The teachers rallied on the same plaza from 1 p.m. Friday until noon Saturday. They assembled at Barangay Bagong Sikat where the school is located and paraded in the San Jose town plaza.

She said they had already filed cases of malfeasance, malversation of funds, late work at the Ombudsman and the Civil Service Commission against schools superintendent Rosalie Marasigan, his wife and high school principal Virginia, and four other school officials.

Deaths

"Three of our co-employees [have] died without receiving any of their benefits because their dues and their borrowed benefits all of us have never settled of any of the benefits offered by GSIS, Philhealth and Pag-Ibig because of their fund was extraneous," Lim said in a letter.

She identified the teachers as Pat Garcia, who died in 2002, Louie Cabinet in 2003 and Rogelio Obligar, 2000.

Lim said they feared that the Marasigans, who reportedly had several lot sales, would escape from the country and run away from their obligations.

She said Marasing took over the operations of the school in 2002, in almost the same time, they discovered that the couple had not been remitting their contributions to government financial institutions after their appointments for loans were denied.

Lim said they have also yet to receive their monthly salaries since July.

"We have repeatedly postponed the filing of the cases because we wanted to settle this issue [administratively], but they refused our offer to have a dialogue with them. We just went our merry back," Lim said in a phone interview. Marlon Ramos and Madonna Virola, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Marine turtle cries, agriculturist finds out

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—What many had been saying was true: marine turtles do cry.

Evangeline Pano, the municipal agriculturist of the northwestern Cebu town of Daanbantayan, knows that she saw seven weeping out of the eyes of a crawfish sea turtle, locally known as "pawikan," while it was being prepared for release into the sea on Monday afternoon.

Pano said the crying turtle was crying when it saw the birth of Alfredo Magale, the fisherman who accidentally caught it last Thursday.

Pano said the birth was just one of the many miracles of the turtle before it was freed.

Residents cheered as the stranded turtle, weighing at least 100 kilos, was freed in Sitio Bagacay, Barangay Daryal, Daanbantayan, some 20 km north of here.

More than 100 people, including the municipal officials and representatives of the Cebu Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro), witnessed the release.

Magale and his two assistants, fishing off Talisai when the turtle got caught in their net.

The Daryal Fisherfolk's Association, of which Magale is a member, decided to report the capture of the pawikan to the municipal government and to the Cenro.

The pawikan was heavily tied on the fish landing area on Sitio Bagacay while waiting for its release.

Pano said they made a hole at the edge of the earthen shell where a tag was placed. The tag bore the names of the three fishermen who caught the turtle and the date of its capture.

Because it was low tide on Monday afternoon, the marine turtle was first carried by Magale and three other fishermen to a deep portion of the sea before it was set free.

DENR paves way for Subic-Clark road construction in Bataan protected site

THE DENR/EMB/RO of Environment and Natural Resources Region III-Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) recently approved a resolution that would allow the construction of a portion of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEx) in the Bataan Peninsula and Limay (BPEL) in Dinalupihan, Bataan.

According to the resolution, DENR will allow BCDA to build the highway in a site that has been designated as a protected area.

However, the BCDA still relies on the area and plans trees, help in the protected area's repair and replace all trees that would be cut.

Ricardo Marcos, DENR presiding officer and environmental management and control supervisor officer, said in a statement that "the unanimously approved decision was the result of months of study and collaborative efforts with the BCDA and has resulted in a win-win situation."

The SCTEx is a flagship project of the Arroyo administration and is a vital component in President Macapagal-Arroyo's 10-point agenda, which will transform Subic and Clark into an international logistics and service center.

Rolando J. Tungpu, program manager of the SCTEx project, said The DENR decision was made after in-depth studies made by DENR and BCDA took into account every conceivable environmental concern ranging from soil erosion, drainage, excavation, traffic and other issues.

The resolution said BCDA would build a perimeter fence and a pedestrian overpass to facilitate crossing to and from either side of the road.

"BCDA will also be giving priority in hiring people from the affected barangays within the Bonneville Park," Tungpu said.

Groups to launch book on Samar poverty

THE CENTER for Anti-Imperialism Studies (Cais), the Leyte-Samar Forum and Friends of Samar and Leyte in cooperation with the UP Manila College of Arts and Letters Student Council and the Manila Collegian are launching the book, "The Untold People's History: Samar, Philippines" at 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 10 at the lobby of the UP Manila College of Arts and Letters on Padre Faura Street, Manila.

Written by Rocco Alejandro M. Jacinto and Bonifacio D. Lagos, the book is published by Solidarista Press, an independent publishing house based in Los Angeles, California.

An activist scholar, Samar student-"Crisis of Empire: A Critique Against Globalization and Third World Poverty as a World System," a book on radical political economics published in 2003, also by Solidarista Press.

Lagos is a veteran community organizer and researcher in Metro Manila and Samar.

Recruiter faces charges for transporting 11 youths

By Joel Amoite
PDI Visayas Bureau

KIMARO CITY—A woman recruiter is facing criminal charges after she was caught transporting 11 youths, three of them minors, in San Francisco town on Surigao Island in Southern Leyte en route to Manila.

Marites Dumao Maldoso, of Barangay Bunlog, Bontoc City, is now detained at the San Francisco municipal jail on moral trial for alleged violation of Republic Act No. 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act before the Regional Trial Court in Hinunlaman.

It was the first case filed in Southern Leyte since RA 9208 was enacted into law last year.

Mario Bulla, assistant provincial social welfare officer, said the three victims—one girl aged 14 and 16 years old and a boy aged 15—were brought to the Provincial Social Welfare and Development (PSWAD) child and youth welfare section at Capitol.

The other victims, aged 18 to 20, were escorted back to Barangay Waisan in Hinunlaman in Bontoc, as they took a restricted boat to San Ricardo town and boarded three motorcycles to Liloan, a distance of 38 km.

The police in San Ricardo, however, got suspicious of their presence and tipped off their counterparts in San Francisco where the group was reportedly passing.

A team of three police operatives accosted the motorcycles in Barangay District, San Francisco. The victims told police that they were recruited to work in Manila.

Supt. Alfredo Sabonsolo, South Leyte police director, said they arrested Maldoso after she failed to present documents to prove that her recruitment activities were legal.

Liloan Mayor Nicolas Hermano had confirmed that the Lilo-an Ferry terminal became the transshipment point of traffickers of women and children from Mindanao and Southern Leyte.

He said he stops the activities of the municipal tanod personnel on shift manner preventing activities from transporting passengers without baranggay clearance in Liloan.

Singh knocks No. 1 crown off Tiger's head

NORTON, Massachusetts—Tiger Woods, for years the unquestioned king of golf, has become a deposed ruler without a crown.

The American's reign as world number one ended here Monday when Vijay Singh handed down of the last four holes to win the DGA Deutsche Bank Championship, stopping Woods' record-tied 264 weeks atop the rankings.

With eight-time major winner Woods not having won a top title since the 2002 US Open and not having captured a PGA Tour stroke-play event since last year's Western Open 14 months ago, the rankings tumble recently reflects the times.

Singh has won nearly $9 million and six titles this year. Woods, who has slumped for months, has owned no titles in just seemed subpar opponents to be quite exciting recently, especially the Wachovia Match-Play title.

"I'm not disappointed about the ranking," Woods said. "I'm disappointed in not winning. As I said, winning takes care of the ranking."

Leading takes it down a notch. Singh owns a 12.72 to 12.27 ranking edge on Woods in a system multiplying two points of play. It's not beyond possibility that South African Ernie Els could overtake Woods as well before the season is completed.

For the moment, golf supremacy belongs to Singh, a 41-year-old veteran who won his third major crown at last month's PGA Championship.

Singh finished 69, two-under par, left him on 16-under 268, two strokes atop Woods and Australian Adam Scott.

"It probably hasn't sunk in yet," Singh said of achieving his dream of being world No. 1. "It was a goal from the beginning of the year. But my goal coming over here was to get my game right there. I got focused and I played pretty good coming down."

AFTER 264 weeks at the world's No. 1 golfer, Tiger Woods (left) gives way to Vijay Singh. AFP

AGASSI: Big match-turning sign

Justine loses title, ranking

NEW YORK—Justine Henin-Hardenne lost her US Open title and her No. 1 ranking Monday night.

The defending champion was upset by India Petrova, 6-3, 6-2, in the fourth round, the earliest exit by the Open's top-seeded woman since Billie Jean King quit because of illness during her third-round match in 1972.

"I never felt good in this tournament. I never felt free in my head. I never felt 100 percent in the court," Henin-Hardenne said. "It wasn't my day, and the player's well, she took the opportunities, and it was hard for me."

The Belgian was hurt by what's normally her most consistent and dangerous shot: her one-handed backhand. She missed three crucial shots on that side on the 8 tiebreaker at the first set, and on the first point of each of the two games when Petrova broke her in the second set.

She finished with 30 unforced errors and just 14 winners—a severe drop-off for her forehand. The 14th-seeded Petrova, meanwhile, played stunning tennis and won the points on 15 of 20 trips to the net.

On the women's side, a big-name showdown is looming in the quarterfinals: Andre Agassi vs. Roger Federer. Agassi advanced Monday with a 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 victory over gal and occasional practice partner Sergio Sergolini, who was on court for nearly 10 hours in his previous two outings. This one took 96 minutes.

Federer's opponent, No. 16 Ivohet Hrbaty, pulled out with a bad back.

"There's nothing more you ask for than to play a big event against the best player in this environment," Agassi said. "It's time to bring the best tennis."

With his upset victory, Petrova moved into her second major quarterfinal, where she will meet another Russian, No. 9 Svetlana Kuznetsova. Two other Russian women won the last two Grand Assumanis Slamkina at the French Open and Maria Sharapova at Wimbledon.

"In the moment, Russian tennis is doing as well. We're all so young," Petrova said.

She's 22 and has never won a tour title. Kuznetsova, who beat Mary Pierce, 7-6 (5), 6-3, Monday, is 19 and owns three titles.

"I know this victory is a good boost of mine," Petrova said. "It'll be a good opportunity for me to try to make the semifinals."

Also in the quarterfinals is Lindsay Davenport, who pulled out a 7-5, 6-4 victory over Alicia Molik.

Davenport swept titles and 49 weeks at No. 1 between them, Hrbaty and Williams swapped powerful strokes and anxious moments in a 6-4 set encompassing 24 points over 73 minutes Monday. Nine aborted. Five break points for 2000 US Open champion Williams. Five match points for 1998 Open champ Hrbaty. AP

Tabuse nears historic NBA stint

TOKYO—Yuta Tabuse has signed for the Phoenix Suns, lowering his hopes of becoming the first Japanese to play in the US National Basketball Association (NBA) regular season, the NBA's Tokyo branch said Monday.

The 23-year-old guard, who took part in the Denver Nuggets' pre-season training camp last year, will join the Phoenix club for the start of the season on October 16.

After failing to make the Nuggets' 12-man roster, he helped Long Beach win the independent American Basketball Association league last season.

Tabuse played with Stephen Young

TABUSE

University's board for three years before joining Toyota Alvark of Japan's Super League in 2002.

He said the Japanese club has put aside his rights and will be playing three more league games, taking part in Phoenix's camp in July and playing in summer games.

AFP

SEAG champ leads Nationals in Asian Mountain Bike meet

ILUSSIO Quiñones and Frederick Ritcheson will lead the country's bid in the 10th Asian Mountain Bike championship set Oct. 7-10 in Pasay to Primera City.

Quiñones won the gold medal in the cross-country event of the 2003 Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam as well as in the inaugural South-east Asian MTB Championships in Kuala Lumpur City, while Ritcheson took the bronze in the Vietnam SEAG and the 2003 Asian MTB in Chinese Taipei.

Leading the women's campaign is Maritea Bilbat, a bronze medalist in the 2003 Vietnam Sea Games cross-country competitor.

Other members of the national team are veteran internationalist Ricardo Casalaja Dela Lugo, Michael Sison, Jonathan Mendoza, Jerry Saclolo, Mike Barbon as well as Mylene Hojeda and Athena Bellino.

The organizing PhilCycling expects 25 Asian countries to participate in the championships, booth in the Vietnam, Malaysia, China Taipei, Indonesia and Thailand have confirmed their participation.

The semifinals cross-country and downhill courses were designed by officials of the national federation for cycling, PhilCycling, and certified by Oscar "Boying" Rodriguez Jr. of Davao City, the country's only international commissaire for MTB.

The Asian MTB highlights the Philippine Cycling Festival, which receives the National Open. There will be national competitions on Oct. 3 at the Automatic Headwear in Quezon City to between race also on Oct. 3 at the Lantaka, a road BTT race on Oct. 4, a mainland sport road race in Tagaytay City on Oct. 5 and the national MTB in Puerto Princesa.

Interested cyclists and clubs may inquire at 879-4275 or 879-4278 or mobile no. 0927-6436673.

SPORTSWATCH

PUP keeps all-students tennis crown

POLYTECHNIC University of the Philippines ended an all-student domination by Philippine Christian University to claim overall title in the Collegiate Tennis Championships over the weekend at the Valle Verde Country Club in Pasig. Pupitenian trapped Christian Dalia, 6-2, 6-4, to give PUP the first point before Eli Ilio vanquished with Dalia and Rico Dalia 6-3, 6-3. Ilio doubles victory over Dalia and Jay Mark Dalia 6-4, 6-4, then combined for tough

PACQUIAO remains without a foe

Pacquiao, Z off to US today

PEOPLE'S featherweight king Manny Pacquiao leaves for the United States today to start training for a soon-to-be-announced fight under the watchful eyes of trainer Freddie Roach in Hollywood, California.

Pacquiao will be accompanied by young Lito sensation Z "The Decent" Gutierrez, who is also scheduled to hook up with Roach. Joining the duo in the trip is Pacquiao's business manager, Bob Nazarro, IBF junior lightweight champ Wobby Pacquiao, and trainer Rod Elorico "Bahoy" Hernandez.

Pacquiao remains without a foe even though he is ready to fight either WBC/IBF junior lightweight champ Erik Morales or Marco Antonio Barrera, the Mexicans losing bouts whom the Filipino thrashed in San Antonio, Texas, in November last year.

It was announced earlier that Morales would fight Barrera on Nov. 27 in the MGM in Ind, but the former said his planned third bout with Barrera is not yet etched in stone. He said he prefers to face Pacquiao first.

World Boxing Council superbantam champ Oscar Larios of Mexico has also expressed interest in moving up in weight to fight Pacquiao.

Meanwhile, Garcia is also expected to fight in the US, according to his manager, Rudy Salud. Garcia is campaigning in the featherweight division.

Salud said the Filipino boxer has been training hard for his planned comeback fight.

IN TIMES OF CRISIS
DON'T RUN OUT OF OIL
BEST - LONGEST ON
PROOFING IS POSS

29ers score sans injured top sentinel

QUEZON CITY—Batangas banked the loss of its starting guard to topple the defending Rafe Warriors, 77-66, Monday night in the NBC (National Basketball Conference) national championship at the University of San Agustin gym here.

The 29ers were trailing 9-13 early in the first quarter when guard Jay Legaud left badly, dislocating his shoulder.

The 29ers of Mahar Mayor Cristina Bayas, Rep. Dave Gomez and businessman Bernie Marasan used Legaud's injury as a rallying point to score their fifth win in nine games.

After Legaud's departure, the 29ers were on a 12-4 run to outpace-ahead, 23-13, going into the second period and enjoyed their biggest lead at 40-31 midway in the third game.

The Warriors, backed by the Rafe Basketball League, led by its president, Robert Ty, fought back behind the strikes of former Wagtag Cardinal Abner Marasani and reliable guard Mikel Bermosa to tie the 29ers' lead to 46-51.

But as previously Marasani closed the quarter with back-to-back triples to widen the gap anew, 54-46.

"This is for Jay Legaud," said coach Tony Garcia. "Before he was brought to the hospital, he told us to win this game for him."

Action continues today with two separate contests. The 29ers, pacing the fourth division, team Dr. Shipp-backed Tubo Angles at 4 p.m. at the Cebu Coliseum while the Spring Cooking Oil-sponsored Laguna Spring Aztecs the Baguio Cardinals at 6 p.m. at the University of Baguio gym.

Navy-Wang cagers overwhelm Air 21

SAN JUAN: Red Bull crushed Air 21, 91-77, and Balbon Beauty held off Air Force, 84-82, Monday at the start of the 8th Danny Espiritu Cup basketball quarterfinals at the PNP gym in Villamor Air Base, Pasay City.

The Navy-Wang cagers of team manager Mel Wang broke away 53-34 at halftime and never looked back to emerge as one of the strong contenders in the tournament organized by the National Basketball Development League in honor of sportsman businessman Danny Espiritu.

Rue Reyes hit 26 points as Balbon of Louie Mangahis topped the Armscor of Col. Jocelino Nelmes after adding an 11 point lead at the half.

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NISSAN

INQUIRER Northern Luzon
Editor Joel Barcelona
Senior Chief Reporter B. Fernandez

Lahar saves Bacolor from floods

By Tonette Orejas
Bacolor, Pampanga

THE SAME ash, sand, rocks and gases from Mt. Pinatubo that strong rains washed down from the slopes in the form of troubling mud in 1991 were the same stuff that saved Bacolor town in Pampanga and its people from serious flooding last week.

Lahar, as how geologists call those lethal volcanic materials, have really changed the face of Bacolor. Deemed rare once—first by nature's wrath and then by being sacrificed as a mine catchment—the town's multicolored terrains have increasingly been turning into a "blessing."

Last week, when rains induced by Typhoon "Marce" and "Chedeng" flooded many parts of Central Luzon, Bacolor, 60 km north of Manila and 39 km southeast of the volcano that literally blew off its head in 1991, resident Salam in the 2003 normalcy period high, like a hill of refuge.

"Water rose to the knee but subsided fast too. Thankfully," said Dominga Lacuang of what her village, Barangay, experienced recently. The place, as well as Barangays Cabambangan, Santa Ines, Cabetican, Tinajero, Talba and Mesalipit, are in the town proper and the zone that are included.

For Lacuang, 60, it was the lahar that gave the residents safety.

"We're already on high ground. Before me, 16 feet of lahar reached the village. That's why I don't expect high floods here anymore. There would only be occasional, slight floods from rainwaters, not from overflowing rivers," the said in Kapampangan.

Changing fate

Pamitan to the place where she has lived since birth, and having returned to Bacolor three years after the 1991 eruptions, Lacuang could not know the changing fate of the town.

In the 1970s and the new decades before the disaster, she recalled, floods lasted a week to a month. "It's really like living and surrounded by water," she said, pointing to the Pasig Potrero River on the west and the Gugo Creek on the east.

But Bakolod, the town's old name, indicated it was originally a high plane near sinallon pre-colonial river settlement, Lubao-based that drenched in the town before the 1991 eruptions indicated that parents to elders (trees had altered the landscape of Bacolor.

Honorato Romero, 62, remembered the round floods that hit the town. And like Lacuang, he said he has watching the coming for them soon.

"We're safe because lahar raised our place," he said in the pampangan.

Lamenting the exodus of communities, the diaspora to at least seven resettlement sites, the loss of houses, farms, fishponds and what American geologist Kathleen Cottenden called the "largest but defined number of people" lured alive by lahar, neither Lacuang nor Romero would still not want to call lahar a blessing now.

Burial

As their sojourners overlooking, June 15, 1991 was not a forty-four day. As the volcano woke back to life that day Typhoon "Unding" lashed. Aside from the ruins of ash, mud and rocks below which suffer, lahar rumbled from the deeper into the Pasig Potrero, spilling and remapping the town.

But the main typhoons "Unding" and "Mameng" on Oct. 1, 1995 were gathering the biggest lahar avalanches. In minutes on that Saturday, the town was entirely gone.

Only the tips of roofs served as reminders of the town that was the country's capital during the 1762-64 British Occupation. Pampanga capital for 340 years until 1904, until the killings of the province for its great literary, cultural and social contributions.

The town that prided itself for being featured a Spain Gem of Asia, said to be Spain's reward for Bacolor's hospitality was reduced to a wasteland. It was Spain's Pompeii. Unsaw Sun Fire (Fire if the Out of Mame) encounters.

Lahar claimed the remaining historical landmarks of memorial from St. Jose Road, who separated a Lo Liga Filipina chapter in the town, of Filipino revolutionaries who wrote their pleas and poems yet held guns, of Gen. Antonio Luna's military formations, and of women who led and motivated soldiers in encounters.

The imposing San Guillermo Church in San Theotis, one of the oldest that the Augustinians have established and from where the local secular succession blossomed, was half-buried, its choir loft without more becoming the dust.

FVR Megaville

The sprawling campus of the Don Honorio Ventura College of Arts and Trades, founded in 1900 and said to be the oldest vocational school in Asia, was left only with its landmark facade.

As if those losses were not enough for the 67,000 plus displaced residents, the government destined to build the FVR Megaville right in Bacolor. It changed and its owners losing the Pasig Potrero, the 56-km dike reclosed nine villages—Bakolod, Dolores, Cumpiras, San Antonio, Balas, Duat, Potrero, Barangay and the Barbaza.

Seven more villages were reclosed: Cabambangan, Duat Valenzuela, Santa Ines, Cabetican, Tinajero, Talba and Mesalipit were bounded by the dike to the west and by the Gapan-San Fernando-Olongapo road that cut through Bacolor with an elevation of 20 meters, to the south, and by the San Fernando-Santo Tomas-Alasalas Dike to the east.

Barangays Cabalantian, where the seven villages were reopened—31,000 houses, 500 subdivisions and thousands of people hustled to right beside the San Fernando-Santo Tomas-Alasalas Dike. To date, only the villages of Cabalantian, San Isidro, Macabacle and Maglalean are outside the dike.

But while Bacolor was largely left empty, 1,700 residents refused to abandon it, or returned to it by 1997, said Commodore in her study, "Can This Town Survive?" (Sun-

ital Research Review, May 2000).

Permanent residents

Mayor Romeo Dungca said about 2,000 families had settled permanently. About 4,000 families return during summer to plant. The rest live in resettlements but come during occasions, he added.

The port of Clat Bacolor exists fully alive only during All Souls' Day, Holy Week, election day and the local Fiesta de la Misa Fiesta every third Sunday of November.

Commodore noted many governance were. Houses built on submerged materials and mixed on stilts, as tall that even a dump truck could pass underneath, have been replaced by concrete but moved before (all houses).

On Wednesday last week, when the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council reported that 212 of 527 villages in 15 towns were still flooded, life in Bacolor was its normal course.

At the Apostolic Shrine in Cabetican just near the dike, unrestrained grass, beside a reconstructed chapel, seasons resisted the country is time for the start of the month-long fiesta for the Virgin Mary.

At the chapel's building, three men installed a new steel crucifix. For those and on a reputable farm that Yolanda Pineda tended on the slopes of the dike, she harvested grass and squash that she would sell by the end of day.

At the revived Blackflue Highway jeeps piled the route connecting Bamban, Lubao, Dangpas and Bamboo to the capital city of San Fernando.

Along the bloodied stretch of the GHQ Road, motorbikers sold antique-looking religious statues and furniture. A kilometer away from the Gugo Bridge, 15 trucks hauled sand from the river.

Children, framed for home after school hours, walked merrily on top of the dike that also doubled up as road. Young men and their rods on the river, hoping to catch fish for dinner.

Beyond the outside the western side of the megadike, the cockpit arena was silent as the tornado raged. Right tubbin, and at the outer edge of the megadike, two lords are chained more to engage same and two, and cultivated on a Bulgarian or grazing grounds for goats and carabaos.

Future of RP films in Baguio amateur video fest

By Vincent Cabreza
Baguio City

EIGHT maverick filmmakers came out with acclaimed artist Kidlat Tahimik in 2002 to discuss the future of pinoy (low-budget movies shot in a week and edited for another week) films.

Some of the filmmakers were first-time directors, who had since achieved some measure of fame for producing successful shows wrapped in formulaic sex and violence that audiences had to expect from illegal Hiro's movie-or-deals.

Film-pro-converts gave directors a week to shoot and a week to edit films for a PL-million production budget.

Kidlat said the directors came to the field expecting box-office windfall but ended up frustrated by the Philippine movie studio system.

"There is a big man, who exploits what movie theaters will show many movie. Studios, which intend to finance new productions, always go through this big 16-silk show how the story should end, which popular actresses to star (she is even consulted about a film's title)," Kidlat recalled listening from the directors.

He said it was an exchange of extreme industry points of view because many of the directors appreciated the complete freedom that director Lily Monteverde's pro-jects received in granted them.

Those contracts still demand box-

A SCENE from the amateur video "Mordonna."

office returns but allow the directors enough artistic license to make their movies thoughtful or, in many cases, satirical. There are the works of Jeffrey Atarah's award-winning film "Ola Bulik" and "Sibug."

Studio system

Kidlat himself scorns the studio system, preferring to make personal comedies about the Philippines that provoke irreverent thoughts about modern Filipinos.

But he said the experimental pito pito films made Philippine film-making enhancement for a change.

The "workers" is serving up again among 60 student filmmakers of the University of the Philippines Baguio, who launched on Tuesday the "Kalinga at Dike" (tonight) — mordonna). (Dikalan grounds), which they billed as the first Baguio Amateur Video Film Festival to commemorate Baguio's 96th charter anniversary.

The festival was produced by the UP Baguio's senior mass communications students for their broadcast Communication 130 (Program Planning and Building) class under instructor Shirley Pinkie Perfecto.

Kidlat said he was drawn to the festival when some of the students Shirley Dawnale Dwakaman and Andy Sandal him a script for a part in their film "Bantay Thoughts."

The festival featured 20 20-minute films on Sept 1-5. The awards night will be held on Sept. 22.

"When I taught films [in UP-Dil], most and UP Baguio, I used to give the kids three weeks of free time to film what they could so they could show me what I could to expect from them. And like most films, they gave me formulas of sex and violence," Kidlat said, reacting to the festival previews.

"It's not their fault. It's the world they grew up in. They believe that films are only be presented with this formulas, so I usually advise them that they can find new ways of telling their stories," he said.

Smart

Kidlat said the festival effects were smart.

Lawa Mayor Calvento direct ori "Banya Thoughts" as a humorous interview of the politics and ecology that also reminds people's collections.

Jenny Abella's cour produced a session on youthful misdemeanors called "Linked." It shows students Romeo Ngayaan Jr. strolling around the ETG-meter span of Lwa or Session Road along downtown Baguio, where he meets a whole spectrum of individuals. Session is the major commercial center, the city's center of night life and the only south gated their rights just strolling up and down the stretch.

Jamaica de la Cruz, a part-time radio disc jockey, stars in "Mon Amour," a Mr. Bourbon strolls down a vengeful agent who abducts children. "Mountainous" was filmed by Bryan Bobbi in Sagada, Mt. Province.

"Nothing failed," which was produced by some of the 1970s' "Oh, God" series, but instead of George Burns, we get director Jose Pardo into One, playing "god" to Robo Dominic Linabad, who asks that she be smitten off the list of people who have pro-American Dixie.

The festival has a couple of films dealing with school abuse and homosexuality.

Alyssa Rose Mendoza's "Kulot" deals with an abused woman's relationship arrogance on men, while April Pauline Asevedo's and Samuel Asecia Jr.'s "Talingkar" (The journey for freedom)" deals on a coming-of-age story for a closet homosexual student.

Angie Jaime from "Animosa (Shadows)," which was helmed by Karl Anthony Gamila, and the all-center saga, "Lizang (Sneak)," directed by Christopher Cruz.

Elizabeth Agbagat is proud that her film, "Sayang (Unbelle)," is the only unabashed love story of the series, but Jose Hanno B said Andre should also go to Cannes. "Together as Allies," the only horror-comedy that tackles the Baguio legend about the "White Lady of London."

Kidlat gave the festival top points for original thought produced under the pressure of time and money.

Each film crew had to raise their own money to make their films, a fact that impressed the world-renowned filmmaker.

The films were produced on a budget of between P1,000 and P14,000. The student filmmakers said their expenses were covered by sponsorships.

Kidlat said he produced the highly acclaimed "Mababangong Bangungot" (Perfumed Nightmare)" in stages because of the decreasing budget and because he needed to find locals willing to showcase their acting prowess.

But Film earned him the International Critics Award for Best Narrative Film, the Caidedo Jury Prize and the Sensational Jury Prize in the 1977 Berlin Film Festival.

ENTERTAINMENT

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Editor Louie C. Camino

Record, film execs suspected of working with pirates

A RECORD executive and a movie producer are among the prominent figures suspected of dealing with a producer of pirated video and audio products.

This was discovered during a raid on a Makati plant by the Optical Media Board (OMB) and members of the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry. The plant, registered to Diana Cabanayan Sian, was raided last month for producing pirated products.

Bet Lawyer Maximo Bautista, OMB executive director, said: "It would be premature and irresponsible for this office to make conclusions on the involvement of these individuals (record executives and movie producers)."

He added that "should the investigation show that these individuals are indeed involved in the operation of the facility, the Optical Media Board will not hesitate to prosecute them to the full extent of the law."

The plant in Pateros, Makati, was found producing fake products on two replicating machines worth about P80 million. The raiders seized the machines.

The raid was part of an ongoing surprise inspection by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry's licensed replicating plants.

OMB Chair Edu Manzano has been conducting an average of two raids daily on illegal music and video production plants.

The campaign of Chair Edu against video pirates has the support of President Macapagal-Arroyo "100 percent," said an OMB statement, because "the President knows only too well that a lot is at stake in the fight and the government cannot afford to let its guard down."

Thousand of bootleg CDs and music DVDs, VCDs and CDs are smuggled into the country each year and sold at dirt-bottle shirt original cost. The fakes deprive legitimate film distributors and music producers of millions of pesos in revenues.

CLOSE WATCH: Chair Edu supervises label dies.

Recently, Chair Edu led his team made a surprise swoop of several malls in Metro Manila, confiscating more than 20,000 discs at the Trinoma, Eastwood Mall, and more than 10,000 discs at the Greenhills Mall, both in Quezon City.

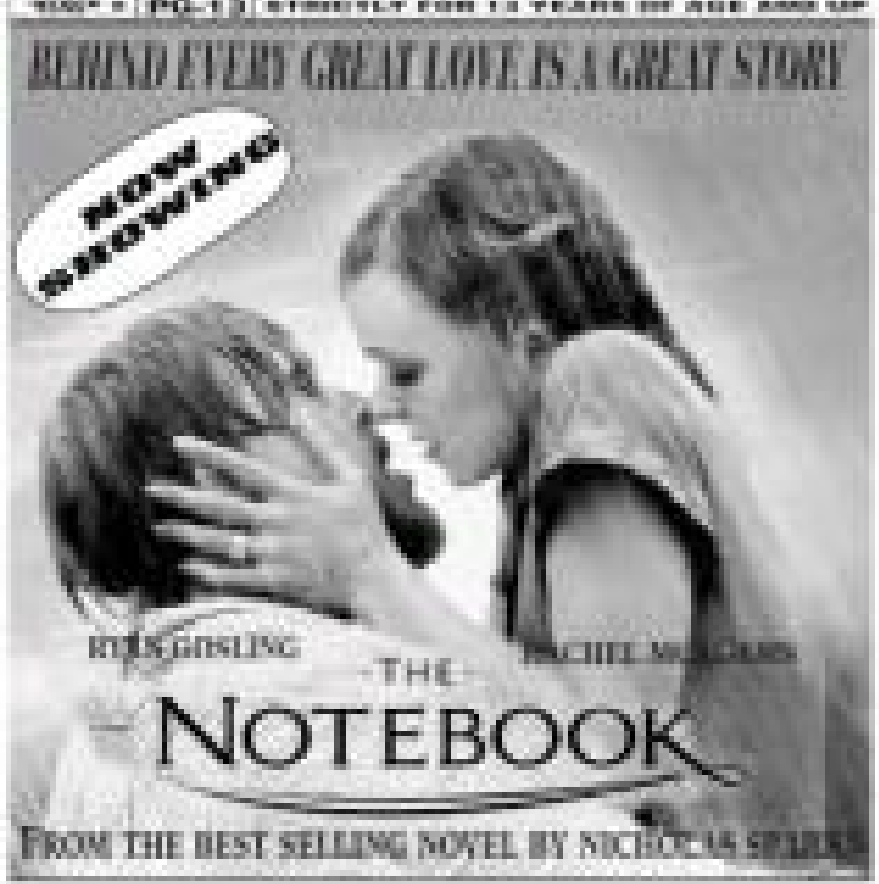
OMB teams in Angeles City seized more than 25,000 discs, including pornographic ones, sold openly in the streets, some within a few meters away from a police station.

Raids on the Krypt Family Mall in Valenzuela, the Divisoria Market, Modern Market and other areas yielded similar results.

Manzano said the raids barely scratched the surface, and it would take much more to drive the pirates out of business. The anti-piracy campaign must be expanded to the provinces, he said. (Story related story below.)

The OMB pointed out that its already September but not more than 20 new Filipino films have been shown. The movie community is worried that new ones, the industry might produce only 30 local films as a result of piracy, said the OMB chair, who is also a movie actor and TV host. — With a report from Mel Rubio

IT'S THE TALK-OF-THE-TOWN!
Pinapalakpakan, Pinipilahan, Pinaliyak



'Our mission is only to confiscate'

By Alex Pal
Phil Pidgin Bureau

BUMAGUETE CITY — Members of the Optical Media Board (OMB), formerly the Videogram Regulatory Board, Friday raided music selling pirated VCDs and DVDs in this Negros Oriental city, confiscating some 100,000 CDs valued at about P2.5 million.

OMB Executive Director Maximo Bautista and acting intelligence and inspection division chief Ferric Maltos led the raiders. They were backed by members of the Dumaguete police as well as civilian agents of the police and other military and intelligence units in Negros Oriental.

Dumaguete City Mayor Agustin Perdices and Negros Oriental Gov. George Arnaiz also showed up to show their support for the anti-piracy drive.

Perdices said it was not the first time they confiscated not just pirated CDs but also pornographic materials from the same vendors in the Bantilan Super Trade area.

"We're looking at two offenses—selling pirated materials and selling pornographic items," Perdices said.

However, the cops did not make any arrests, only confiscating the CDs and later having them evaluated by a committee.

Bautista said the OMB team in Dumaguete was only one of the biggest raids in the region, even compared to the recent raids in Cebu City.

"Our mission is just to confiscate these items," explained Bautista. "If we make arrests, it would mean we will have to file cases and we cannot keep on coming back here for that."

Maltos promised the anti-piracy drive of the OMB would continue without letup. "We know the modus operandi of these vendors," he said. "The moment we leave, they'll go back to business. But we'll come back in a few days and raid them again."

Maltos said their haul in Dumaguete alone was by far the biggest haul in the region, even compared to the recent raids in Cebu City.

GMA vows to take on 'vested interests'

Critics have warned that in order to develop the economy, the country must tackle widespread tax evasion, the control of industries by a few powerful families and the dominance of political dynasties which pass on power from one personal heir to the next.

"If these vested interests believe their encroachments or sabotage can affect us, they better think twice. Our people are behind me. I have their mandate, and I am here to serve that mandate for our nation's best interest," Ms Arroyo said in her opening remarks.

The President said it was not easy to take on entrenched interests that would strangle government bureaucracy or selfishly propel private gain.

More forceful President

"There are many generations of neglect and abuse to be weeded out. Armed with patience and dogged perseverance, I am pacifying back the 'carabao' by one, ever mindful of those who want to undermine my success efforts to bring our nation back into fighting form," she said.

Pablo Tarum Isot Tony Lopez asked if the people would see a "more forceful President in the next six years." Ms Arroyo replied: "I think being a responsible President I can, I can do that and in fact I don't even have to be popular."

Ms Arroyo said that to achieve sound fiscal management, she was "paring back our government to live within its means, by eliminating waste and redundancies and reallocating funds into areas of vital investments that will build a strong foundation for the future."

By the time the state went to 28-30, Ms Arroyo said she expected to achieve a budget that spends less for debt service and more for public service and infrastructure.

Value formation, more teeth

"I ask our citizens to unite in common purpose and change the culture of corruption that hunts government and entrepreneurial enterprises alike. We must work together to perform and nationalism in our schools, places of worship and the workplace to build a culture of honesty and integrity by rewarding hard work over easy gain," she said.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo presides over the National Security Council meeting in Malacañang on Tuesday

The President said that to address endemic corruption, she was adding values formation to the lifestyle checks on public officials and personnel.

Using Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption as a model for her anti-corruption campaign, Ms Arroyo said she had increased the budget of the Office of the Ombudsman to allow it to hire more investigators who would stand up to well-paid private lawyers.

Ms Arroyo said she would give more teeth to the enforcement of revenue collection and regulatory institutions "to create a truly modern, transparent and world-class revenue and financial system."

The President's tough talk came as she was seeking cuts in government spending and the passage of eight tax measures to help the cash-strapped government deal with the budget deficit.

Before speech, Ms Arroyo painted a bright picture of where the country was going.

She said that for the first time, the people were united in a "common purpose to work together as partners to contribute to the new Philippines.

"This road will not be easy but the bumps will lessen over time and the slope will be less steep," she said.

"This is a stark difference from the time I assumed the presidency three years ago: the country was on the edge, politically, economically and especially my job at that time was to stabilize the nation and provide a calm platform from which to govern," she said.

Ms Arroyo also noted that the economy grew by 6.1% percent in the first half of 2004, the highest in 13 years.

Create new middle class

"The Philippines is ready to be a 21st century economy based on modern financial and manpower systems, an open and transparent business environment and a government that will live within its means," she said.

"We are a nation of remarkable resilience, endowed with deep natural resources, a young and motivated workforce, a dynamic democracy and a growing economy. We can create a new middle class and eliminate poverty," she said.

"Indeed, it is a challenge and I don't underestimate the obstacles to change. We must pass vital legislation to Congress to raise much needed fiscal revenues and to remove the obstacles to increased investments and growth," the President said.

Ms Arroyo said the people who had offered contributions were making "clear acts of faith in our capacity to overcome crisis."

"We urge Congress to match the spontaneous and spirited response of people by putting national priority on much needed revenue measures to bring forth lasting solution to the crisis," she said.

"To meet the challenges, Ms Arroyo said she put up a sweeping reform package to "strengthen what is weak and further invest in what is strong," she said.

Ms Arroyo said she would continue to work to link the Philippines to the world of commerce and trade, and offer the best practices of the world to the country.

"I am as proud of this nation, it's people and our many friends around the world who continue to invest in our nation and believe in the promise of the Philippines. With your help and determination, we at long last will bring forth a new modern nation that will lift its people while reaching out to the world. Our time has come," she said. *With a report from AFP*

IN THE KNOW

What do vested interests mean?

In law, vested interests is defined as "a legal right to present or future enjoyment of property or to an economic position."

In politics, they refer to private sector groups that gain benefits from government through political connections.

For example, government contracts involving billings do not go to the most qualified bidders but to those who have connections to government, said Dr. Francisco Magno, executive director of De La Salle Institute of Governance, a research and training unit under the office of the president of the De La Salle University System.

Other benefits given to vested interests may include licensing of infrastructure and transportation projects such as railroads and more broad management projects, Francisco said.

Fighting vested interests means "leveling the playing field so far as the government's regulatory functions are concerned," he said. — **Pia Ranada**

Malacañang seeks supplemental budget for Napocor

and not lending.

"Therefore, their solution is to hit the consumers with P75 billion (in higher power rates) and to hit the taxpayers with P60 billion (in new taxes)," said Recto. "This is not good and if we keep on doing this, we are bound to look to the IOGC problem."

He said senators were against new taxes because the public would be hit by a new tax burden.

First, he said, the increase mandated by the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) would give Napocor P37 billion. Second, the ERC might possibly grant another P37 billion to Napocor increase for the rest of the year.

Because these rate increases would be insufficient to balance its finances, Napocor would transfer another P37 billion in liabilities to the national government in 2005.

"Now you, he said, Napocor wants the government to again assume P60.9 billion in liabilities, which will further increase the public debt. In effect, it wants P37 billion in current expenses shouldered by the taxpayers for next year alone," Recto said.

Interest payment

Recto explained that the financial problem could be blamed on the allowance of 50 percent of the budget for interest payments, which "towards one investment in infrastructure and social services."

He said that aside from the very low tax collection to cover the interest expense, the devaluation of the national government to convert debts of GOCCs, particularly Napocor, and government financial institutions (GFIs) aggravated the financial problem.

He also blamed President Macapagal-Arroyo's decision to cut by 40 centavos per kilowatt hour Napocor's purchased power cost adjustment in 2000, which burdened half-owned the utility firm's debt until 2009.

Senators Boras, John Arroyo, Sergio Osmeña III, Juan Ponce Enrile, Ramon Magsaysay Jr., Panfilo Lacson, Juan Flavier and Senate President Franklin Drilon agreed that the GOCCs and GFIs had brought the fiscal problem upon the government.

Osmeña warned all GOCCs and GFIs to submit to the committee a list of salaries, allowances and perks of their officials.

Arroyo, for his part, went to the extent of branding Napocor and some GOCCs as "useless utilities," and he only hoped "piss of" senators is no short-time since are not making money and are incurring losses."

He also wanted to conduct an inquiry into how Napocor was able to enter its senior officials to "the tune of P1.2 billion over with its financial problems.

"It was confirmed that Napocor, which was really the culprit in this whole financial mess, paid its top and lowest officials over P12 billion. They could not explain where they got the money," Arroyo said. "That's the kind of government we have."

He said he was going to investigate the retirement program because Napocor senior vice president Roland Quitalo claimed at the hearing that the program was done in accordance with the law.

"They (senior people) because I will look into this very carefully," said Arroyo, who pointed out that even before Napocor could sell its generating cost, "they already got the money ... then how ridiculous themselves."

Window-dressing

Recto said that the government had been window-dressing the public debt by claiming that it was being incurred by the national government and, therefore, should be borne by the taxpayers.

"But the truth of the matter is that most of the debt of the public sector is due to the GOCCs," said Recto, who said it was high time Congress put a stop to the practice of hiding the GOCCs and GFIs.

"Since 1998, we've assumed P470 billion in actual liabilities of GOCCs, and another P260 billion in depreciation of these liabilities because of the foreign exchange," he said.

In overt a fiscal crisis, Recto suggested as the economic managers to immediately bring down the consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD) amounting to P1.4 trillion (as the end of 2003).

CPSD refers to the total public sector debt, incurred by both the national government and the GOCCs.

"Let's decrease it to levels acceptable to the international community," he said.

Solon hits Pagcor-Stanley Ho tieup

transparency? the Shenzen Marina Casino Hotel in Makati, Manila, on Feb. 13 under a Pagcor franchise.

Enrile said he would not understand why Pagcor was granting franchises to establishments that would compete with its own operations when it was clear that only Congress had the authority to grant gambling franchises.

Figueroa called on Congressmen to review Pagcor's charter, particularly its granting of franchises or other perks.

"Gambling is bad enough," he said. "We should focus at least the country not to allow foreigners to control even our vices."

In Dagupan City, Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz issued a statement expressing support for the proposal to put Pagcor's profits into the national treasury to help the country out of the economic rut.

Cruz, who is serving as antigambling crusade in the country said the government did not have to look far for a solution to the fiscal crisis.

"There the billions generated by Pagcor in the national treasury [and not it] for [for budgeting]," he said, adding that the proposed seized seven billion by Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. "is an idea that bears to be heard."

Fort Bocaroda, etc.

Figueroa said Cheng was behind the renovation of the Fort Bocaroda hotel in Boron Stone and its conversion to a first-class casino for high rollers from Hong Kong, Taiwan and China.

He said Cheng was "keep renovating" the Bocaroda ship docked at the back of the Cultural Center of the Philippines complex for a casino opening on a hotel, casino and restaurant in October.

"Obviously, Jack Lit (Cheng) has developed some strong connections with persons who claim to have influence with the incumbent administration," Figueroa said.

He noted Cheng's supposed "intimate companion" as Tanya Tang, a "stunning and reportedly beautiful Chinese lady," and said the couple were working with a Filipino partner whom he identified as Andrew Tan.

Figueroa pointed out that Pagcor was among the government's top revenue-generating agencies.

"Why should its business and potential revenues be shared with private firms, particularly with foreigners?" he said.

Sanitizing Pagcor

Cruz, a former president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, said putting Pagcor's profits in the national treasury would be "the least that can be done to sanitize/humanize the gaming line."

Quoting newspaper reports, he said Pagcor had generated more than P1 billion from its operations during the first quarter of the year.

"By placing the revenues in the national treasury for line budgeting, there would at least be [a] semblance of legitimately laundering them," he said.

Cruz said Pagcor money, used legitimately by the government, would help the country out of the fiscal crisis.

"[The result is] real," he said. "The economy expect is needed to make this conclusion. It is enough to look at how much money is in the pocket of the common (man), how much total there is on his table, and how he makes both ends meet."

At the same time, Cruz said, it would be good to know how much money Pagcor was earning from its operations.

Gambling galore

"How much does it get?" the archbishop said. "How much goes to whom, to what and why? The right answers to these questions might prove very revealing, very interesting."

Rep. Mat Nitet Carreon (PR-Tagaig Pateros) assailed Pagcor for its supposed plan to reintroduce gambling through texting.

He said such a plan would lead to status anyone with a cell phone to gamble anywhere and anytime.

"This means people can gamble even when they are in school and in church. Even youth under 18 will have access to gambling," he said in a statement.

Carreon also noted that aside from loss gambling, Pagcor was said to be laying the ground for gambling through the Internet.

If this pushes through, it will bring gambling "to every home, to every office, to schools and even to the country," he warned. *With a report from Yolanda Sotelo-Fuentes, Phil Bartlett, Lucas Bureau*

Pact assures safeguards vs gas cheats

By Tina G. Santos

THE QUEZON City government and representatives from oil companies and three dealers have put in place measures to protect the public from gas stations short-selling gasoline products.

In a memorandum of agreement, oil dealers agreed to conduct regular pump testing and calibrating procedures to monitor abuse with retail sales of the Department of Energy.

Both parties also agreed on the tolerable limit of 50 ml for every 10 liters.

In the event of discrepancies beyond the tolerable limit, dealers would immediately close the pump until recalibration and sealing has been done by the city treasurer's office.

But in part, the city government would conduct quarterly inspections to ensure that pumps in gasoline stations are properly calibrated.

"Under the Quezon City Revenue Code, it should be done annually. But we will do it on a quarterly basis to safeguard the interests of oil consumers," Mayor Sonny Belmonte said.

He added that with the system in place, the public is assured that they would be buying the right quantity of gasoline from refilling stations in the city.

The city has about 118 registered gasoline dealers.

Joining Belmonte were Dr. Dante Saturnia, president of the Association of Filipino Shell Inc.; Dino Garcia, president of the Federation of Petroleum Dealers; Ruth Abubito, of the Petron Dealers Association; Bernardo Montero, of Tamaya Petroleum and chair of the Philippine Independent Petroleum Corporation; and Glen Pe, of Intelli.

Belmonte also certified as urgent the recommendation to impose stiffer fines on gasoline stations found short selling oil products.

As proposed, fines would be raised from P600 to P1,000 for the first offense, and from P600 to P2,000 for the second offense.

To date, the city government has collected a total of P923,111 in fines from refilling stations found short selling to customers.

Manila raises land tax

By Terry V. Quiaraundo

RED SIGNS for land owners, but good news for City Hall.

In the midst of a flood crisis, the Manila City Council probably approved a tax measure that would double the real property tax paid by the city's land owners to boost revenue collections.

In the council's regular session yesterday morning, party affiliations prevailed through a vote of 10-7, with members of the majority bloc supporting the new tax rates.

The approved tax measure, proposed in July by the council's majority bloc shortly after the new council began, would double the assessment level of property in Manila starting January 2005. For commercial property, the assessment level would increase to 50 percent next year, from the current 25 percent.

Taxes, be cushioned if property would also become more pricey as the assessment level would be twice as much, or 20 percent, discounting January.

The assessment level is the value multiplied to existing real estate rates to compute the tax dues that a given land owners should pay. Tax rates, meanwhile, are unchanged at six percent levied: 2.5 percent for residential lots and 3 percent for commercial property.

Manila taxpayers may pay their annual real property tax dues in four or two installments, or in one lump payment.

The assessment level in the value multiplied to existing real estate rates to compute the tax dues that a given land owners should pay. Tax rates, meanwhile, are unchanged at six percent levied: 2.5 percent for residential lots and 3 percent for commercial property.

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The assessment level is

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OBSTRUCTION RUDY ESPIRAS

FX taxis occupy two lanes near the Aurora Boulevard-Edsa intersection while waiting for passengers, thus blocking traffic, especially during rush hours.

Muntinlupa City hit by garbage haulers' strike

By Martin P. Marfil, Nancy C. Carvajal and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

GARBAGE haulers appealed for understanding as they launched a strike yesterday, paralyzing trash collection operations in Muntinlupa City.

Samahan ng mga Manggagawa sa REN Transport spokesperson Romualdo Hernandez said about 600 union members and members of their families had started to picket the firm's garages in Tandang Sora, Quezon City, Muntinlupa and Rodriguez, Rizal, because their employer had not been paying their salaries. They also accused REN Transport of unfair labor practices.

The strike prevented about 100 garbage trucks from leaving their garages.

Workers filed their notice of strike on July 7 after management dismissed 29 union officers and 20 other workers. The union claimed that REN had violated provisions in their Collective Bargaining Agreement like non-conversion of unused vacation leaves, lack of medical assistance, delayed payment of salaries and management's failure to pay Social Security System premiums.

Drivers at the firm get about P250 daily, while their collectors are paid P200 to P230.

But Hernandez said that management deducts P50 for "abuloy" or death assistance contributions and P20 for an undetermined reason every time they get their pay slips. The "abuloy," he said, is supposed to go to the union, but these were never turned over, he added.

Conciliation meetings were held after the filing of the strike notice and, on Aug. 6, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas certified the case to the National Labor Relations Commission that ordered the case for compulsory arbitration. On the last day of conciliation meetings, management told workers it had no capacity to pay them.

Transport Corp. is owned by Nilo Pangguin, workers said. The INQUIRER tried to get their side of the story, but failed to talk to any of its officers. According to an employee who refused to be identified, almost everyone left after learning about the strike. The workers also went on strike in 2002 and 2003.

Muntinlupa Mayor Jaime Fresnedi ordered the city's Environment and Sanitation Center to take the necessary steps to cushion the impact of the strike.

Nine barangays in Muntinlupa were affected by the strike, except Ayala Alabang Village that has another garbage collector, apart from REN Transport.

Yesterday, Malabon City Mayor Canuto Oreta called an emergency meeting to discuss contingency plans for the possible garbage collection crisis. Malabon is one of the cities in the metropolis that had hired the private hauler's services for daily garbage collection.

The strike nearly paralyzed the garbage collection in at least 15 of the 21 barangays in the city.

But because REN Transport had delegated garbage collection in the remaining six barangays to a partner private hauler, Oreta managed to convince the hauler to collect the garbage in the 15 affected barangays.

Oreta said he had already talked to other private haulers should the standoff between REN Transport and its employees continue. He said he would also lend some of his family's trucks to help in the collection.

The mayor is also considering an earlier plan to reopen the city dump in Barangay Carmon that the environment department closed early this year.

San Juan town, however, is not affected by the garbage strike, according to the town's chief information minister Jonnabelle Lee. REN Transport is just one of its contractors, she said.

The cities in Eastern Metro Manila are not as troubled. Marikina City collects its own garbage. Officials of Pasig City and Mandaluyong City said REN Transport is not one of their contractors. *With Luige del Puerto*

Makati City maps identify cheap routes

By Margaux C. Ortiz

FINALLY, a map that would enable commuters to choose cheaper routes.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) would be distributing this week transit maps which specify the routes of jeepneys and buses in Makati City.

"This would be especially helpful for commuters and tourists who do not know proper and alternative routes," said MMDA-JICA Senior Urban Development Adviser Yoshio Tanaka.

With the map, commuters will be able to choose the most convenient route and mode of transportation, thus saving on fare.

The map identifies public utility vehicle routes and end terminals, except those of FX taxis and tricycles, which do not have particular routes.

The map, which took JICA three months to put together, also includes a fare matrix of buses, jeepneys, light-rail and metrorail transits.

"Filipinos are not fond of reading maps so we made them less complicated," MMDA-JICA executive secretary Malou Andrada said.

The map will be given away for free.

tanong ng Bayan

INQUIRER TV

ABC

Tuwing Huwebes, 8pm

Host ang inyong "feature view" sa 2910. Pilipin namin ang pinakamagaling sa gagot. Ang premyo linggo-linggo **isang 21" color TV set**

I-type: INQTV <ang inyong sagot> <buong pangalan> <lugar kung saan kayo nakatira> tapos ipadala sa 2910. Cut-off time WEDNESDAY, 6PM. Winner will be identified during the INQTV program Thursday 8pm, on ABC.

text 2910

OCWs in Iraq: Dapat bang alisin na ang ban?

Narito ang ilan sa mga sagot nitong: Text na' "d mwala ang pinagbabawal ng mga ocws iraq nang wala pa rin tyo sa mga kano"

Ruben Anquilo, Catbalogan, Samar

"ang pilipino kht anong hirap pasukin aglyo e only filipin mbuhy ing mga G that is why mn kyo bnt ilbon? d ww mn ang pnlyan ni juan"

Evelyn Cristobal, Colombo City

Alleged Yakuza man arrested at BI office

By Jaromo Aning

A JAPANESE man suspected to be a former member of the Yakuza gang was arrested at the Bureau of Immigration central office in Intramuros, Manila, the other day while he was applying for an extension of his tourist visa.

Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said Takamashi Tatsuhiko, 48, had been wanted by the International Police and the Tokyo police since March 11 for destruction of property.

Quoting the Tokyo police, Fernandez said Tatsuhiko was a former member of the Boryokudan gang, a faction of the Yakuza criminal syndicate.

Tatsuhiko's case stemmed from an incident on Aug. 13, 2003, when he and three alleged accomplices rammed their car into the gate of the Adachi Gine Corp. in Tokyo.

The bureau also found a separate deportation complaint against Tatsuhiko. It was filed by his estranged Filipina live-in partner, whom the BI did not identify.

The woman said the suspect had been operating an unregistered business in Manila called Tatdoi Construction Co. without her permission and authority.

She also complained that her husband, who returned from Japan a few weeks ago, had been carrying an unlicensed gun which he would allegedly often fire indiscriminately in their neighborhood in Parañaque City.

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2004
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
B1
BUSINESS

Editor Raoul D. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Carrie S. Nantes

Senate sets probe of state-owned firms

By Michelle V. Rama

BLAMING the country's fiscal problems largely on the "mismanagement" of government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), the Senate committee on ways and means is preparing an audit of the financial performance of state-owned companies, and an investigation of the way their officials are handling the finances.

"It is now clear that our problems are brought about by the way these GOCCs were mismanaged, but it has never been pointed out in the newspapers. All of a sudden people are blaming just Bayrel, which has been in existence for decades now for the country's fiscal problems," said committee chairman Juan Flavier.

Sen. Ralph Recto, chair of the ways and means committee, noted during the hearing that the bulk of the country's debt was had been caused by the huge loans of GOCCs like National Power Corp. The loans, Recto said, GOCCs to enter into large borrowings, which boosted the country's public sector debt.

Citing data from the Department of Finance, Recto said that of the P3.3-trillion public sector debt as of 2003, borrowings made by GOCCs accounted for P1.1 trillion, while the national government's share was at P2.2 trillion.

While the national government roughly accounts for 60 percent, or bulk of the public sector debt, a substantial part of its borrowings were also intended to help financially ailing GOCCs. In effect, Recto said, the GOCCs actually account for the bulk of the country's debt. He added that since 1998, the national government has already been assuming liabilities of state-owned companies.

"The problem has really to do with GOCCs' loans that have been growing exponentially," said Recto. He noted that after posting a cumulative budget surplus of P32 billion in 1981, GOCCs have posted P7.7 billion in losses in 2003, ballooning to more than P138 billion this year.

(CONTINUED ON A2)

Forex reserves inch up to $15.96B

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S gross international reserves inched up by $31 million to $15.96 billion as of end-August from a month ago, buoyed by proceeds from the government's fresh foreign borrowings.

BSP officers in charge Alfonso Reyes yesterday said the end-August GIR level was well above the central monetary agency's target of $14-$15 billion for 2004.

However, the end-August level was lower than the $16.13 billion build-up during the same period last year.

"The increase in GIR was mainly attributed to the national government's deposit with the BSP of proceeds from the reopening of its global bond issue," Reyes said.

He noted that the net deposits placed with the BSP during the month stood at $413 million.

"These were partly offset, however, by the GIR-servicing requirements of the national government and the BSP," he said.

The GIR, consisting of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, special drawing rights from multilateral institutions and foreign investments, is seen as an indicator of the country's ability to service the foreign exchange requirements of the economy. Central banks likewise dip into the GIR when they defend their local currencies against speculative attacks.

"The GIR level is adequate to cover about 4.3 months' worth of imports of goods and payments of services and income. The level is

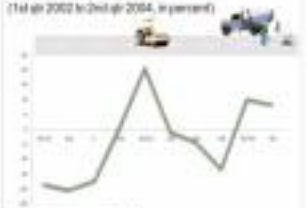
(CONTINUED ON A2)

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Growth in investments

(1st qtr 2002 to 2nd qtr 2004, in percent)



Source: National Statistical Coordination Board

Manuel D. Tolosa, PDI Research

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KIA

KIA MOTORS

We tell it as it is.

DISCLOSURES

VICTORIAS Milling Co. has paid P9,328,819.86 to its non-trade creditors/trade suppliers as of Aug. 31.

* * *

SHERWOOD Hardware, corporate secretary of **ISM Development Phils., Inc.**, tendered his resignation on Sept. 1, effective immediately.

* * *

VIVANT Corp., (formerly Philstar Corp.) said it will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on Sept. 30 at 10 a.m. at the Apacible Room of the Cebu Country Club on Gov. M. Cuenco Avenue in Banilad, Cebu City.

* * *

At the annual stockholders' meeting of **Wakefield Philippines Inc.** held on Sept. 6, the following were elected directors for 2004-2005: Emmanuel Magsaysay, Patricia Gregorio, Kenneth Salvidalgo, Pandian Gabrielson, Alexandrino Gonzalez (independent), Arthur Lopez (independent), Ernesto Almeda, Lamberto Monsanto Jr. and Elvira Ong. ATMC Agno Mawaphaya was elected secretary pro tempore. **Compiled by D.J. Yap, PDI Research**

www.inter-ed.com

BEYOND HORIZONS

16th Career Counseling & Guidance Fair

WHEN: SEPTEMBER 16 & 17, 2004
WHERE: PHIL TRADE CENTER (PTTC)
ROXAS BOULEVARD,
PASAY CITY
TIME: OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
9:00 AM TO 5:00 PM
(Entrance Fee Only P50.00)

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International Education Specialists

Senate sets probe of state-owned firms

From page B1

The bulk of the budget deficit of GOCCs was accounted for by Napocor, which is requesting its loans to reach P111 billion by year's end. Napocor is the single biggest liability of the national government, which intends to assume the power firm's P600 billion in debt as a means to privatize the ailing power sector.

Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, also a member of the Senate ways and means committee, directed 31 state-offices to provide the Senate committee with the financial statements of all GOCCs for scrutiny. He likewise asked the DOF to furnish the Senate a report on the salaries of GOCC officials.

"Are you aware that the salary of the CMO head (Napocor official) is P600,000 a month? If you don't know the salaries of the GOCC officials, I can't much about your supervision of the GOCCs," Osmeña told Finance Undersecretary Hawas Dueñas.

The senators said they wanted an inquiry into the many officials of GOCCs were compensated and the way the finances of the state-owned firms were being handled.

Budget Undersecretary Lutea Punzal, in response, admitted that the losses of state-owned firms were "staggering," but added that the economic team was already trying to address the problem.

She said the economic team, which includes the DOF and the Department of Budget and Management, was preparing a draft executive order for the approval of President Macapagal-Arroyo that would give vast supervisory powers to the DOF over GOCCs.

The budget official said the executive order, if approved, would require all state-owned companies to submit financial reports to the DOF on a quarterly basis and authorize line agencies to conduct an audit of the GOCCs whenever deemed necessary.

NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Solano, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE OF SCRAP / USAC ITEMS

NGCS, MINDANAO, INCOS

UP TO 5P 000,000 Sept. 30, 2004, 2:00 PM, Solano Bid Process Bldg. Building I, Napocor Cpd. NPC Road, Brgy. Ogbac Solano, Nueva Vizcaya, Mindanao, Caraga City

	Item Description and Location	Minimum Bid Price
1	Lot 1 - Lot of unserviceable and scrap metal, consisting of used and defective spare parts, copper tubes, welded electrical, lengthwise metal, aluminum, steel, galvanized iron, and other scrap materials, electrical equipment, wires and cables, electrical appliances, as stated in the pictures, located at Kanaungan NPC Substation, Tuguegarao	P 1,000,000.00
2	Lot 2 - Lot of unserviceable and scrap metal, consisting of used and defective spare parts, copper tubes, welded electrical, lengthwise metal, aluminum, steel, galvanized iron, and other scrap materials, electrical equipment, wires and cables, electrical appliances, as stated in the pictures, located at Kanaungan NPC Substation, Tuguegarao	P 1,000,000.00
3	Lot 3 - Lot of unserviceable and scrap metal, consisting of used and defective spare parts, copper tubes, welded electrical, lengthwise metal, aluminum, steel, galvanized iron, and other scrap materials, electrical equipment, wires and cables, electrical appliances, as stated in the pictures, located at Kanaungan NPC Substation, Tuguegarao	P 1,000,000.00

SCHEDULE 2

	Type, Brand, Description of Items	Minimum Bid Price
1	Old Motorcycle (Suzuki Japan, as is where is)	P 5,000.00
2	Used Diesel Engine (1 unit)	P 5,000.00
3	Old Transformer (1 unit)	P 5,000.00
4	Used Diesel Engine (1 unit)	P 5,000.00
5	Used Diesel Engine (1 unit)	P 5,000.00

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. ORIGINAL BIDDER'S PROPOSAL DULY SIGNED BY THE AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMPANY, DULY NOTARIZED, SHOWING THE BIDDER'S OFFER, ITEM BY ITEM, AND THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF THE OFFER, ORIGINAL OF THE COMPANY.
2. LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN AND NATIONAL OR CERTIFIED BUREAU COPY THEREOF AND AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT (ORIGINAL OF THE COMPANY).

Bid documents purchased with the amount indicated in the public bidding shall entitle a bidder to one (1) set of bidding documents. Bidders may submit bids for one or more items. Bidders are encouraged to inspect the items offered for sale prior to the bid opening. Bidders are invited to be present during the bid opening. Bidders shall be required to submit a Bid Security in the form of a Cashier's/Manager's Check, Bank Draft/Guarantee or Irrevocable Letter of Credit issued by a reputable bank equivalent to at least two percent (2%) of the Bid Price. The Bid Security shall be forfeited in favor of the Napocor if the successful bidder fails to enter into contract within ten (10) days from receipt of the Notice of Award. The Napocor reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defect therein, and to accept the offer most advantageous to the Napocor.

For more information, please contact Ms. Cecilia Cayabyab, Chairman, BAC Secretariat, Tel. No. (078) 326-2000 local 2201.

(Sgd.) ATTY. ROLANDO M. CAYABYAB
Bids and Awards Committee
Chairman

Forex . . .

From page B1

ular equivalent to 2.2 times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.3 times based on residual maturity," he said.

Short-term debt based on residual maturity refers to outstanding short-term external debt on original maturities plus principal payments on medium- and long-term loans of the public and private sectors falling due within the next 12 months.

This brought the BSP's net international reserves as of end-August, inclusive of revaluation of reserve assets and reserve related liabilities, to $13.79 billion or 8.4 percent higher than the previous month's level.

The GIR level is expected to improve in the next few months due to more bond offerings planned by the government.

The government has earlier plans to issue the international capital market issue with a bond float of at least $750 million despite its recent admission that it was to avoid a fiscal crisis.

The government recently mandated three investment banks—Credit Suisse First Boston, Deutsche Bank and JP Morgan Chase—to underwrite the new debt offering.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES
Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City
Telefax No. 911-6001 Loc. 6592
e-mail: ...@yahoo.com.ph

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The General Forces of the Philippines invites all manufacturers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the Supply and Delivery of Various Medical Equipment, with an approved budget in Thirty Six Million Pesos (Php 36,000,000.00) chargeable against the AFP Modernization Trust Fund, Undersecretariat for Civil Affairs, Office of the Secretary, National Defense Department, under the General Appropriations Act (GAA) for the Year 2004 as follows:

ITEM	NOMENCLATURE	AMOUNT
LOT 1	...	P ...
LOT 2	...	P ...
LOT 3	...	P ...
LOT 4	...	P ...
LOT 5	...	P ...
TOTAL		Php 36,000,000.00

Delivery shall be made at the Philippine Army Medical Center, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila within sixty (60) days from receipt of the Notice of Award/Purchase Order.

Bid documents for the acquisition of the said equipment may be purchased starting September 1, 2004 until October 1, 2004 during office hours at the BAC Secretariat Office at the ... Philippine Army Medical Center, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00).

Bid proposals for the acquisition of the said equipment must be submitted on or before September 15, 2004 at 10:00 a.m. and will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who may wish to be present at the time.

ITEM	BID DOCUMENTS	PRICE
LOT 1	...	P ...
LOT 2	...	P ...
LOT 3	...	P ...
LOT 4	...	P ...
LOT 5	...	P ...

Bid documents shall be prepared in accordance with the provisions of Republic Act 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations. Bidders should submit their bids in a sealed envelope, clearly indicating the project name for which the bid is being submitted and the words "DO NOT OPEN BEFORE..." The bid price shall be in Philippine Pesos and shall include all taxes, duties and/or levies payable by the contractor under existing laws of the Philippines.

In the event of tie between two or more bidders, the BAC may break the tie by conducting a public bidding among the tied bidders in accordance with Section 41 of RA 9184 and its IRR.

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract without incurring any liability, and to waive any defect in the bid in the interest of the government.

For further information, please refer to Ms. ... Bids and Awards Committee Secretariat, Philippine Army Medical Center, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Metro Manila.

(Sgd.) ...
Chairman, BAC

The PMAP Industrial Relations (IR) Committee and the Philippine Association of Land Service Contractors (PALSCON) cordially invite you to a symposium on:

COOPERATIVES AS SERVICE CONTRACTORS?

Date: September 9, 2004
Thursday
Time: 2:00-5:00 pm
Venue: Metro Club,
Makati City
Fee: P 600.00

- Hear the discussion on the legalities of cooperatives as an alternative to outsourcing.
- Hear it straight from long time PMAPer and now Department of Labor and Employment Undersecretary, the Hon. Josephus B. Jimenez, PMA.

For reservations please contact:
...

Stocks

From page B1

The bargain hunting, focused on widely-held issues having good earnings prospects, helped cushion the shortlived sell-off, brokers said yesterday.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index gained 39.33 points to 1,671.76, the intraday high. It was the index's highest closing level since Feb. 19, 2004, when it settled at 1,673.95.

Gainers outnumbered losers 64 to 34, with 49 stocks unchanged.

Volume rose to 8.38 billion shares valued at P1.19 billion from 5.3 billion shares worth P696.7 million on Monday.

Globe Telecom up 4 P40, its highest while rival Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. gained P.50 at P1,950. AFP

Bullish mood despite crisis talk

MANDARIN Oriental Governor Rafael Buenaventura will make a rare appearance this afternoon, together with the GMA economic managers and Energy Secretary Vincent Perez, at a midyear economic briefing to assure investors and fund managers on the country's long-term fiscal, as well as economic, outlook.

But even before the briefing, the stock market pointers are already cozying with their peers, given the situation outside: deficit-fraught talks Malacañang and the politicians have been entangling.

Restoring the market mindset, mainly on the strength of local buyers, breached the P1-billion level—actually a far cry from the pre-currency crisis daily average trade of P3 billion—on the assurance from the central bank that it would hold the key rates steady despite the crude oil-spiked inflationary trend.

Still, the trading volume was enough to push the market to a three-year high at 1,671.75 points, appreciating the blue-chip composite level of 1,673.95.

Those who managed, for instance, to position themselves with Metro Pacific at the 20-centavos-level last week nearly doubled their money yesterday, despite MPCI's clarification that the real-estate company's diversification into the auto-generating multibillion-peso expressway venture was probably still years away from reality.

Even consumer-level corps gave up some ICTSI, with Enrique Razon Jr. vigorously denying insinuations that he is behind Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago's investigation into questionable competitor Harbor Centre, managed to add 58 centavos more yesterday to close at 19.55, from last month's P3.30.

If the rally continues—and governo ment can finally manage to overcome populist sentiments and walk their tough talk—expect the two leading lemale stockbrokers shooting buy and sell orders on their phones, instead of public by-arguing at each other.

$100 fare is buck

MANILA-HONGKONG Airlines has brought back its popular cash-plus-miles promo in time for the fall travel slack.

Beginning tomorrow, fares from Manila to Hyderabad, San Francisco and Siem Reap-Angkor Wat can be had for as little as $100 plus 45,000 frequent flier miles. Not enough mileage? 25,000 miles plus $200 or 25,000 miles plus $300 would also qualify.

Hard Rock Hotel has once expanded the promo coverage to include all other multihotel US cities and Canadian destinations, for an extra $100 per fare.

As well, roundtrip economy fares to Tokyo or Nagoya could be availed of for as low as 10,000 miles plus $200; and business class passage for 30,000 miles plus $200.

Promo travel out of Manila may be taken any day from Sept. 15 to Dec. 8. The fares all have 60-day validity, which means the return flight to Manila may be taken as late as Feb. 8, 2005. Reservations must be made before Dec. 15, 23, during the height of the holiday Sahalak rush.

Book and buy deadline is Oct. 15. The promo is available only through Hari Soriente offices or through the airline website.

Seats are limited.

Trooper a trouper

DESPITE having snapped its US production after the 2002 model, the Isuzu Trooper is still being offered in the country, just like the Mitsubishi Pajero/Field Master series, a testament to their endearing local popularity.

In fact, if you scour the website, there is apparently no other country except the Philippines that is still assembling and selling even the right-hand version of the Trooper.

Isuzu Philippines is scrambling to recover sight the 2005 model of the Trooper, which looks very much like the current model save for more extensive features. The price for the 2005 has yet to be determined at press time, but it should not deviate much from the P1.799-million tag of the current 3.0-liter model.

Isuzu has sold a total of 5,722 Troopers from its 1999 local introduction up to July 2004. The figure does not include the pundit-favored hand-imports brought in from Subic and Clark.

Heard through the grapevine

THE BENGUET majority owner of wireless broadband provider Mindshare Telecom that Smart has acquired for an undisclosed amount is none other than former Manila Rep. Mark Jimenez.

Jimenez, who is currently serving his short jail sentence in a farmer-acclaimed facility in Cho-ngo barangay of his adopted home state of Florida, intends to return to the country and reclaim his old district.

(Email: undercover_pdi@yahoo.com or undercover_pdi@hotmail.com)

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THE NEW FREELANDER

GMA nets ₱884M in first 7 months

By Cielcie S. Batino

GMA NETWORK Inc. yesterday reported a net profit of P883 million in the first seven months of the year, up 23 percent from P717 million a year ago.

The second-largest broadcast network is now claiming to have overtaken its focus competitor in terms of ad-time sales.

The company's revenue grew 17 percent to P4.3 billion from January to July, but operating expenses also increased by 20 percent to about P2 billion from P1.7 billion a year ago.

Felipe Gozon, GMA president, said the company would push through with its initial public offering in the first quarter of 2005.

Gozon said the company would be issuing an underwriter during the third quarter and the process of valuation, registration and getting approvals would come afterwards.

"The plan of selling shares in the domestic and foreign market has not changed," said Gozon. "We will push through with the IPO by the first quarter of 2005. We are still working on the same numbers and timing all three major shareholders are in agreement about the plan."

The company is planning to sell 30 percent of its shares to the public in case as much as P5 billion for the broadcast firm and its major shareholders.

Gozon said GMA was likely to hit its profit target of P1.3 billion this year from a billion pesos in 2003. GMA had surpassed ABS-CBN in terms of profit since last year.

During the first half, ABS-CBN registered profits of P581 million against GMA's P771 million.

Gozon said 2004's performance in July were still below the company's forecasts to get "the story looking at sales of about P650 million in July, but the actual figure was lower. It was still ahead of last year, but there are indications that there could be a slowdown in what we are seeing industry-wide."

In July alone, sales hit about 600 million. Income for the month of July was at P133 million.

The GMA official said that in the first 7 months, GMA's airtime loading was already about one percent less compared to the previous year. He added that the 4-ad network likely suffered a double-digit drop is airtime sales.

"From January to August, we maintained our total city-edge earnings, not because of ads but of cost efficiency. We cut spending. Our advertising load this year is lower than last year because of our commitment to the Advertising Board to regulate our commercials," Gozon said.

BEDRIDDEN WITH BEDSORES?

FAR EAST MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

DBP expects to earn ₱2B in alternate trade system

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE DEVELOPMENT Bank of the Philippines (DBP) believes that it can earn over P2 billion in the first three years of operating an alternative trading system (ATS), said an official of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

But according to Emilio Aquino, SEC director, the commission has yet to approve the DBP's proposed operation of an electronic market for buyers and sellers of securities.

Under SEC rules, an ATS is "any organization, association, person or group of persons that operates or provides an electronic marketplace to bring together primary market issues of securities of SEC-registered small, medium, growth, venture enterprises and technology-based ventures and investors who subscribe to those securities."

The SEC director explained that the ATS would help small and medium firms or self-church entrepreneurs, a form of debt owed to a company for certain goods sold.

The DBP in April said that it would launch a new marketplace for securities of SMEs to banks and insurance companies—the first of its kind in the country.

DBP officials are hoping to speed up the lending to SMEs by creating an electronic market place for the SMEs' receivables from large companies.

Banks and financial institutions are in the business of buying receivables, also known as factoring. For instance, an SME that supplies goods to a food and beverage firm can sell its 90-day receivables from that same food and beverage company. However, the processing would usually take a month to do so, as the buyer would still have to call up the food and beverage firm to authenticate the receivables.

What banks bid for the receivables of selected companies, SMEs would benefit by getting the same cost of their assets.

"The DBP will put up an electronic auction/auction system for these receivables and their clients a marketplace, a bidding system so that banks can compete to lower the cost for SMEs," said Simon Swayne, former UBP president.

The DBP had tied up with computer giant IBM to develop the facility. The facility aims to attract investor among banks and other financial institutions.

2bU LIFESTYLE

Going crazy over Javier

The hot R&B soulster gamely bares his romantic, sensitive soul to 2bU!

By Angelo V. Ignacio
2bU Correspondent
Photos by Richard Perez

"ITO ay para sa lahat ng nagpapakadong lesbian/ngayong gabi," Javier intones carefully, hardly stumbling over the words. Then he looks at us for confirmation. Pink magazine's resident musicologist Joaquin Valdes and I both flash thumbs-up signs at him, and a triumphant grin spreads across his face.

We are having a late lunch-cum-interview with R&B's hottest prodigy-to-date, unsuccessfully teaching him a few key phrases to woo the ladies in the audience. Pinoy-style. "Can't wait to see this one tonight," he says with a smile.

Javier had last flown in from LA for a two-night performance here in Manila, one in Boracay and the other in Malabon Town Center. This marks his second stop in Southeast Asia, following his stint in the MTV Asia Awards in Singapore last February.

With his smooth voice and ready smile, he could easily be the type of guy to swoop a girl off her feet. Add to that his sensuous lyricism, and he's definitely got ladies from different parts of the world going "a little bit crazy" indeed.

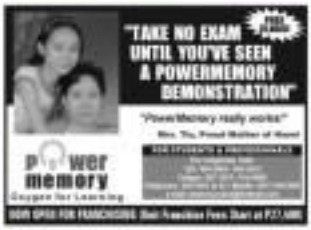
Javier candidly recounts his amusing encounter with a fan at a McDonald's branch here in Manila: "I had just come from golfing (yes, he's a diehard golfer) when a girl came up to me and said, 'You look like Javier.' Well, I am Javier!'... And she goes, 'I can't believe I'm actually talking to you!' Then she just sang 'Crazy' in front of me! That was priceless; you won't make that stuff up."

Old-school roots

Javier's music personifies its respective role: songs of musical nature, 'beautifying' old-school grooves with modern R&B beats, pop sensibilities and sweet balladry. He counts soul and R&B luminaries like Stevie Wonder, Brian McKnight, Dennis Hathaway and Mel

(CONTINUED)

"VANITY is what I'm all about... I like being different."



2BU! FASHION FREAKS

Playing with (giant) dolls

By Pan Pastor
Photos by Randy Hamalian

FROST, a retail maker...

We may have outgrown our love for curly hair, scarves and dollies, but we still always be little girls.

Yes, current wearing, candy-loving, stuffed-toy hugging, Mary Jane-wearing little girls. We still like playing with dolls too—and our invitation to Rickets' Glamour launch gave us the opportunity to dress up giant ones.

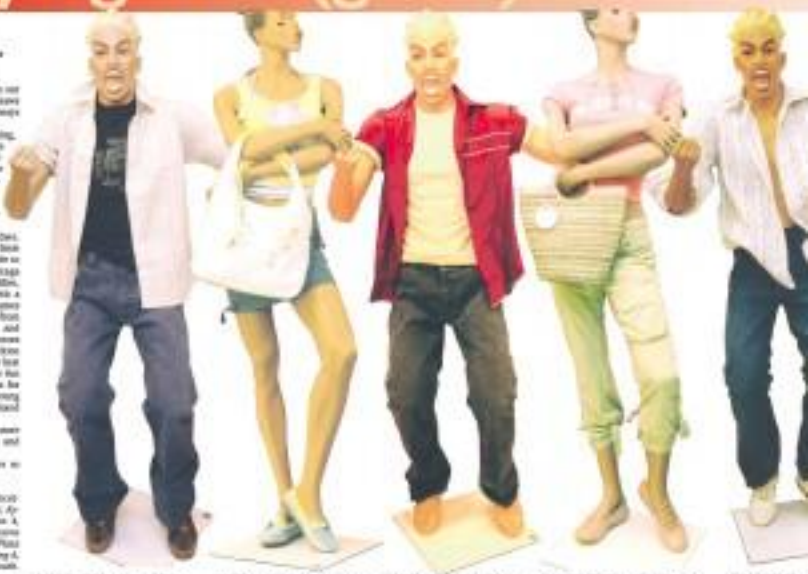
It wasn't a typical play-date, since all, how many other little girls can boast of being able to get expert stylist Mikel Arriaga to join in on the fun? Mikel, who has collaborated with a number of established names in the fashion industry—from photographers and hair and makeup artists to an abundance and models—and has done projects with the country's best designers, helped us create the outfits that are fit not just for the runway/gala, but for young urbanites who want a relaxed day.

The afternoon at the store was one of fun, fashion and discovery.

The final pic didn't get to bring home the dolls.

Rickets Boutique are located at Alabang Town Center, Ayala Center Cebu, Glorietta 4, Robinsons Galleria, Robinsons Place Ermita, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, SM Megamall Building A, SM North Edsa and SM South mall.

If you want the Barbie Pendleton coat, your store or check out your nearest Rickets, e-mail us at: info@fashionfreaks.com.



ROUND-NECK raglan tee (₱799), turtleneck top (₱1,490), five-pocket cross-seamed denim pants (₱1,890), Mesh shoes (₱1,990)

PRINT top (₱490), boho-neck top with tie bandeau (₱990), sleeveless tee (₱590), miniskirt (₱1,290), cross bag with detachable mirror (₱1,690), Mario shoes (₱1,490)

ROUND-NECK T-shirt (₱790), woven shirt with plaque (₱1,490), five-pocket cross-seamed denim pants (₱1,890), vintage-looking Vinyl shoes (₱1,990)

SHORT-SLEEVED tee (₱1,990), wheat pants (₱1,290), hibiscus bag (₱1,490), pink shoes (₱1,990)

LONG-SLEEVED tee (₱1,290), regular fit (₱1,190), stirrup-in shoes (₱4,990)

More F4

By Nancy T. Lo
Contributor

TAIWANESE boyband F4 is very much in the limelight. But the four years of "Meteor Garden" are also starting to take their toll on its members.

Mr. Chen is appearing in a new television drama series called "Wet Cool." Barbie Hsu is in no rush, saying that is promoting a new solo album. He took three years to realize that project. Jerry Yan is doing location shooting for "City in the Sky" for Central Broadcasting Network in China, whereas Wu is preparing his own album in the United States.

Mr. Chen, popularly known as "Vanness," plays two brothers in the Chinese Television Service's "Wet Cool." The drama captures the problems of gay relationships. After completing the filming of the series with Barbie "Big E" Hu, he developed a keen interest in the study of human nature. He is confused on him a number of books on the human psychology. Chen thinks he could use his newfound knowledge to help his fellow members in their personal problems.

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Paradise on earth

Jerry Yan, for his part, is spending time in a "paradise on earth" in a remote part of China. The landscape is fantastic. But the weather is unstable. Zhou has had to put up with both sudden heavy downpours and blistering days. Outdoor filming has meant grabbing a meal and relieving self wherever he found himself. Friends who wanted to visit him were discouraged by the prospect of having to travel one whole day to get to the shooting site.

Zhou plays a photographer. Inquisitive photographer in the drama. Off-camera, he has developed real interest in photography. His agent helped him rent a vehicle to enable him to travel more freely and do some personal filming. On fascination with city-country cultural interactions in China drew him to do some documentation beforehand. In fact, he can identify the colorful ethnic groups by just looking at their head accessories and costumes.

Jerry Yan, affectionately called "Shine Pai T'u (Circle #Shine Bubble)" by fans, has been keeping a high profile to drum up an anxious fans' a labor of love—a solo Chinese album. The tunes (a target) does not, in style, for those the 10 songs after going over 1,000 pieces, most of them emotion-filled ballads.

This marks Cen the album for three years. As he put it, "Despite have been so supportive of what I do. I work hard to show that I am not shallow."

Yan, identified by hordes of fans wherever he goes, says: "Some fan scenes that the public places where I can go freely have become rare and few. During my travels, I stay in six-room hotel of the film. I tend myself and get deeply engrossed, ending up feeling in love just like the characters. I also search DVDs to while away my time."

Yan recently went to Canada behind to shoot a commercial for a jewelry label. He grabbed the rare opportunity to take a dip in the sea without the fans popping up to seek him. He just went in without even changing into swimming trunks.

Bigger following

F4 fans in Taiwan have lately found the images of Jerry Yan and Vic Zhou on Pepsi bottles being emailed. According to a Pepsi statement in Taipei, the two stars enjoy a much bigger following than the other two—Ken Zhu and Vanness Wu. However, Wu appears on Pepsi bottles emailed in Hong Kong. Don't forget has yet to be launched in Pepsi bottle.

Vanness Wu is choreographing his own summer his new album, which he is producing in the United States. His showmanship as a performer recently earned him an invitation to participate in an MTV show in Korea. Little did he realize the extent of his popularity in Korea.

A fan on the flight he took passed him a note, asking him to come into many fans would welcome him at the airport. He replied that he cannot expect without a single fan. To his great surprise, more than 200 fans greeted him. He was overwhelmed by their warmth.

SYNCHro. Vic Zhou, Jerry Yan and Vanness Wu appear separately and together in Pepsi ad campaigns across Asia.

Going crazy . . .

Turn to page 31

...ngpot star's
...yama
...aking Rita.

...ria Grace as his first movie lead.

It's a good series of fans and critics who going on, too. In fact, he views a lot of fan differences as a growing up in a reasonably and culturally diverse family. His Dominican dad surrounds radio station that played records from, his Puerto Rican mom loved the "oldies but goodies," and his siblings listened to anything from hiphop and R&B to rock. Hence, one could hear a little bit of everything in his songs. "Variety is what I'm all about... I like being different," he explains.

The 27-year-old musician from Universidad took classes in medical laboratory but later dropped all hints for five years, finishing with a degree in Music Education.

"If I wasn't [making music], I'd probably be teaching music to kids," he says. He was doing vocals for several bands when he met a producer from LA, who took a liking to Javier's music. They put a demo together and put it in the hands of an over-talented lawyer, and it all blossomed from there.

Although he plays the piano and some percussion, the guitar is his constant companion during shows, backed up by a band that includes his brother Pablo. That time, however, he prefers to go intimate with the Filipino crowd with only his guitar and two of his peers.

"The true-sounding stuff is what we like to do. Sometimes the whole band sound is gone, but we like to be very close, especially when we're introducing ourselves... our [getting] to know each stuff in the song," he says.

Romantic, sensitive soul

A songwriter as well as a musician, Javier penned the lyrics to his eponymous debut album, "Bare (only) skin" used for artistry's title, because the album is Javier himself in the very raw. A song of his ideas, experiences, reflections and everything that's important in his life, and everyone can relate to the stories he's telling.

For instance, his first single, the phenomenal track "Crazy," describes the heart-racing, nervous-palms feeling of being in love. "It's a song about new love, when you first start romance," he explains. "The first couple of things that do can drive you crazy like when they call you on the phone and you know that it's them, and you're afraid to pick up because you don't know what to say and you wanna sound cool... You know, that whole dance that you do to impress somebody."

Meanwhile, the equally dreamy follow-up "If I Never Get To Heaven" has been gaining some serious airplay lately here and abroad. Javier recently went to Croatia for the Spanish-tailored "Bar Spoke To Me," the gravy "Garden Sky" and "In Your Hands," a spectacularly-scorching salsa-y bossanova, to a loud, lively or superlative crowd.

So, what drives Javier crazy? "Cold. Me being here [in Manila], being able to share my music," he says curiously. "Music is life for me... I know there's nothing else that can make me feel as good."

Well, amen to that.

Javier's self-titled album, released under DM Philippines, is out in stores now.

E-mail the author at ...@...

Win tickets to '13 going on 30'

...Magazine and ...will be giving away pairs of tickets to the special advance screening of Jennifer Garner's "13 going on 30" at Gal Megamall's Cinema 14 on Sept. 10 at 7:30 p.m.

If you want a free trip to the movies, e-mail us at ...with your ...and ...and tell us why you'll be hanging with you and why Dan's Project to send us your name, age, school/office and contact numbers.

We'll be calling you soon.